







our indomitable Helphast army marches against you, to resist is hopeless. Surrender or he destroyed trampling your cities, obliteraling your society The invasion of your planet has begun. Today and forever silencing you, our oppressors We seek no truce. We offer no mercy

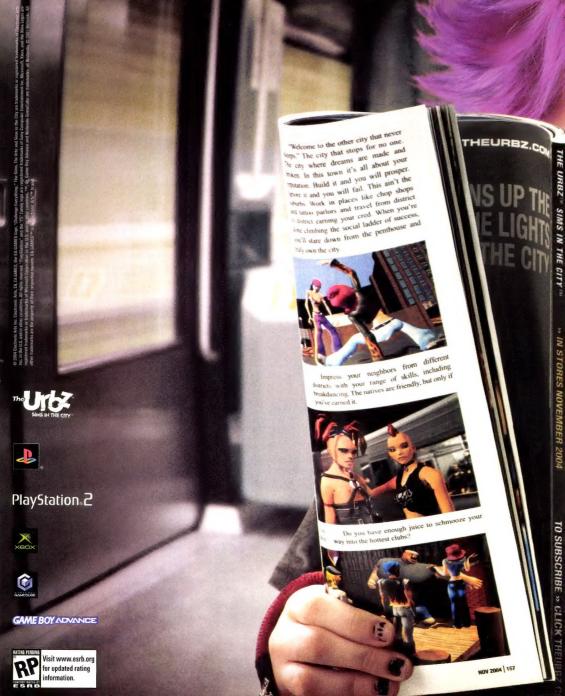
- 11 chaotic trench, urban and guerilla wartare environments.
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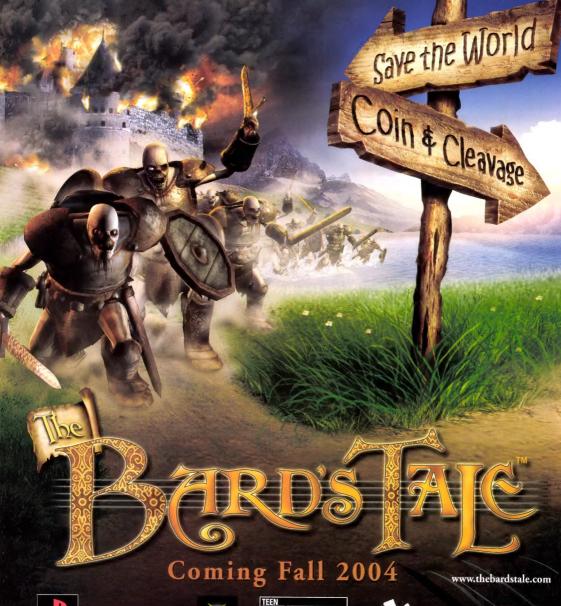
PlayStation.2

LIVE IN YOUR WARLD. PLAY IN DURS.





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PlayStation<sub>2</sub>









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The Bard's Tale made us bust up. Not just once or twice, but seemingly in every other scene.

\*\*Common humor than the entire Xbox library combined..."

\*\*Pick of the Month - October 2004\*



Advanced Attitude System - Your Snarky or Nice decisions change the course of the game for true replayability.















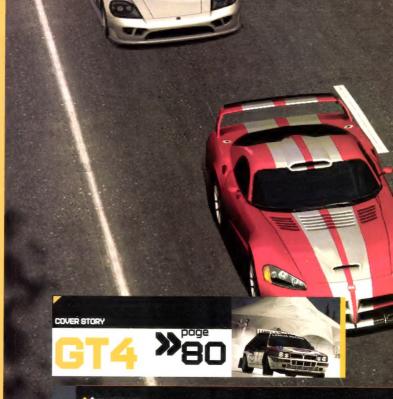


WHY THE BIGGEST RACING FRANCHISE ON PS2 STILL MATTERS.

THE SNAKE EATER HAS ARRIVED.

WHICH GAMES TO BUY FOR THE CHILDREN-AND WHICH TO AVOID.

DOES THE SEQUEL TO 2003'S GAME OF THE YEAR MEASURE UP?



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## 1UP.COM THIS MONTH



### 1UP.COM

Did you devour your OPM in one sitting but still feel yourself jonesing for an update on the latest gaming news? Well, you're in luck 1UP.com has new content every day to fill that gaping void in your life.

### Tup ::



### OPM.IUP.COM

The Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine homepage. Come here for all the extra bits that we couldn't fit into the magazine

### P82.1UP.COM

Everything PS2 from all of the Ziff Davis Media Game Group publications, including Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine, Electronic Gaming Monthly, GMR, and 1UP.com.

### RACING.1UP.COM

It's as if 1UP was shoved kicking and scream ing through a racing game filter that removed all of the site's extraneous nonracing content

# D PAU

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### BOAROS.IUP.COM

Got an opinion about a game? Just post it on the nandy dandy 1UP boards and you're guaranteed to get flak not only about that opinion but also about everything else in your life, from your body aroma to your parentage

### CLUBS.IUP.COM

You might have a preference for fighting games, Perhaps your affinity lies with Japan ese import games. Or you could just like anything that tastes like chicken. Whatever your tastes, there's a club here for you.



HOME PATHEMENT

### FEATURED CLUB

For those of you who feel the need to express your enthusiasm for Gran Turismo 4 or, indeed, air your grievances as to its delays and omissions, this is a community you'll fit right in with. Everyone here loves cars and bikes, and driving them really fast

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The best deal in videogames

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# HOW DO YOU TOP THAT?

2004 HAS PROBABLY BEEN THE BEST YEAR EVER FOR PS2, BUT WHAT OF 2005?



What's next? Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas is out, Ratchet, Jak, MGS3, Killzone, Prince of Persia, and a zillion others are already in stores, and there aren't enough hours in the day to play everything. Next month, we'll finish up the year with reviews of Gran Turismo 4 and GoldenEye, but what happens then? Is 2005 going to be a complete disappointment? Given that all the big names just hit—is there anything to get giddy about? Skip to page 31 to find out what 2005 will bring, and then check out our five picks for the start of the year on page 38. Who knows? If things go according to plan, we may see a steady flow of great games all year in 2005. W John Davison

### THE OPM FAMILY

### MISSION STATEMENT

he Official U.S. PlayStatio Viagazina is the only Son and is published b uch, the Official U.S. PlaySte ion Magazina (OPM) remai candid coverage of PlaySta



# JONGEWAARE

is a badass. No, really, she is-look, you can tell by all of the dope GTA gear that she's sporting. In fact, she's so badass that Rockstar has contacted her to be a consultant for the next episode in the series, Grand Theft Auto Das Moines



### JOE RYBICK decided, after playing:

days' worth of Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, that he could run on walls just like his new hero. If you see him on the street in his shiny new wheelchair, make sure to ask to sinn his cast He's also accepting sympathy mail



# NGUYEN

has a very messy desk that: he cleans every 2.25 years. He doesn't grasp the concepts of "organization" and filing." He also likes to surf the Internet for animated pictures of Gandalf lay over and over again. We don't know how he gets anything done here



### GIANCARI D UARANINI

is tired, so very tired. Not only did he have to move to a new apartment, but his diet this month consisted mostly of small pieces of candy and alco...err, soda. Let this be a lesson to you, kids! Eat five square meals a day

and plenty of vegetables



### RYAN VULK

left a certain galaxy far, far has become one of the away (LucasArts) with all deadliest ninias on the its Ewak-shootin' good OPM staff and all of the ness to be the new kid on Bay Area with the deadthe block and learn all the liest ninjuisu of them at deep, dark secrets of the pterodactyl. He tricks his target into looking high OPM. He would tell you lebout them, but then he in the sky for an elusive would mysteriously "dis beast, then strikes his appear" and the disc mark with a flick of the would never get done! wrist in the junk.



## ALEJANDRÖ

is impervious to Ryan's junk-punching tectics by virtue of his unbreakable skin. Said skin is also the key component in his joy ous helmetless rides aboard his Buell and his ability to shrug off all incoming bullets and bad design aimed at him.



### TODD ZUNIGA

spurned Canadia for good and (finally) moved back to the United States (this time to NYC). Just in time for George Bush's reelection which made him want to leave the country all over again. Aside from that, he's been playing and playing and playing GTA San Andreas.



### ZOE FLOWER

is a freelance writer, television producer, and member of the Canadian Tambourine Association. Her parents aren't hippies, and yes, that is her real name, although she answers to over 50 nicknames. In her spare time, she likes to kick strangers and memorize '80s power ballads.



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**INGAN PARR** 

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# ON THE DVD

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Hope you remember your arithmetic, because there's a whole lotta numbers jostling about here. Every demo on this month's disc is a sequel to another game. And we're your only chance to see whether the sequel is better or worse than the original



aoijels Veld



## Hey kids, make your hard drive spin hard for its money by

downloading this map right now! Go now! Spin! Read all about it and more on page 128



Who describes off-road ATV stunts as "fanciful racing"? The disclaimer does. Be as fanciful as you can, and then check out our review on page 111



### JEMTIFUL JOE 2

Proof that cheerleaders can indeed be superheroes, too. If you're a cheerleader, this demoalso teaches you how to fight robots and dinosaurs.



### PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

Did you know that it takes about four normal swings to slay a zombie pirate? Resilient corpses, they are! Learn to efficiently slay them on page 112.



FOR YOU?



### MEGA MAN XB

This demo is chock-full of robo bees, robo-piranhas, and briskly spoken Japanese speech. You can learn much more about the actual adventure on page 109.



# CON RETURN TO ARMS

If you're one of the four people who thinks a Thundercats game is a good idea, you can play this and pretend your iron sword has the Eye of Thundera.



### TMNT 2: BATTLE NEXUS

Don't believe us when we said this sequel is tres terrible? Well. if not, then this demo of the shelly ninjas versus evil ninjas will prove our case.



Billy Shakes once wrote, "If music be the food of love, play on." P Diddy once claimed to have invented the remix. That said, do your own remix here.

# **WATCH IT**



Wny are you reading this if you haven't picked up the game? This video is pretty snazzy, but not as snazzy as making your digital CJ a rotund gangsta.



Don't be deceived. This trailer talks about saving souls and secret societies. But it has no warnings of crazed vampiric wrestlers or erotic puppets.





Sure, you see Godzilla and a whole buncha other monsters here. But where's King Kong? The "draw" from Godzilla vs King Kong needs resolution!



### SOCOM II: BOOT CAMP

SOCOM II players who think they're hot dudes get served a heaping piece of humble pie by going through an "easy" version of the SEALs' Hell Week.



### Demo Disc Producers

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Steve Williams, Jesse Card

Executive Producer Andrew House

Format 0&A

Sam Bradley, DeMarlo King Account Coordinator Fric Inpolito

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Lead Programmers

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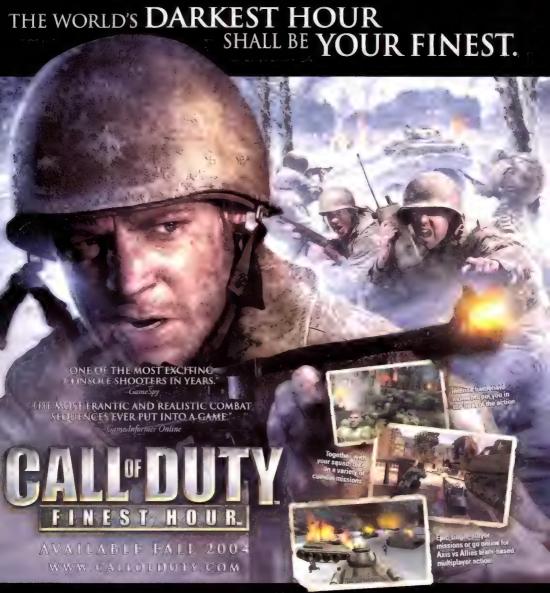
Maimoona Block, Kirsten Costello, Tom Gillan, Michelle Manahan Gerald Martin Jim Williams

Did you buy a copy of our magazine that did not contain a demo CD? Simply send the receipt in an envelope marked "OPM Replacement Disc" to the address below with the name and address of the store plus your phone number and address. and we'll send you the disc. Make sure you specify which month the corresponding disc belongs to in order to ensure you get the right one

If you have a malfunctioning or non-working demo disc, call EDS at 1-800-627-6458. They will provide instructions to obtain repair or replacement services

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PlayStation 2

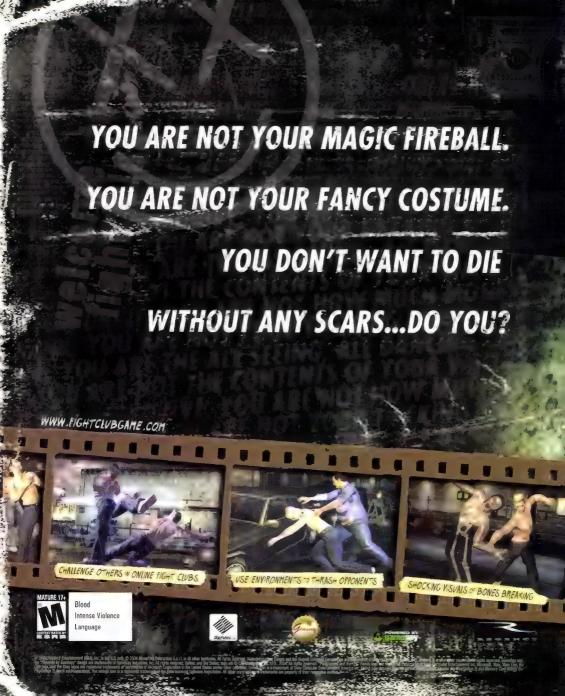


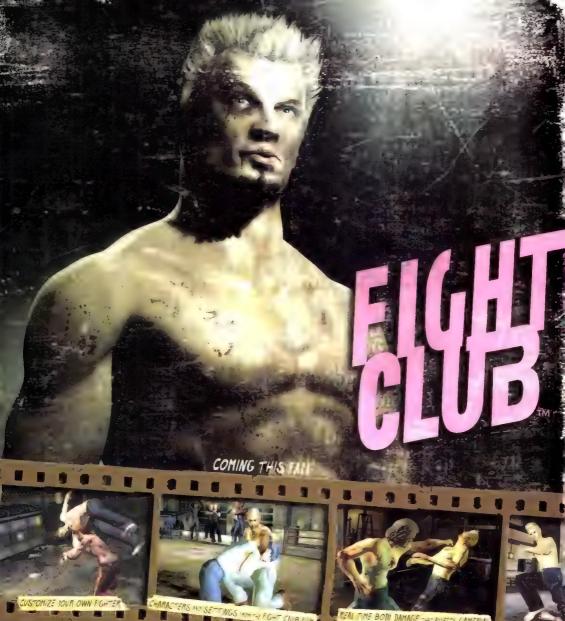






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# PlayStation

### LETTER OF THE MONTH

I felt that I needed to write you and tell you a true story about why you guys and the PS2 are true lifesavers (to me. at least)

In 2001, I was diagnosed with cancer in my right eye; it had to be removed. After surgery and during my long recovery, I fell in a deep depression; I didn't care about anything or anyone, and I wanted to die. My wife called my doctor (Dr. Browning), who said, "What I'm going to say might sound crazy, but just trust me," and told her to buy a PS2 and some games to make me use my mind and not think about everything that was happening to me

My wife laughed, but she did it anyway. She brought one home and said, "Hey, I got you something, please try it." After a few minutes, I decided to put in Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty. And I've been playing ever since.

The next day, she saw your magazine and brought that home, too. I'm still suffering from the bills and the craziness, but I'm alive and well, I love my family, and now I have 32 games and a lot of OPMs.

Well, I just wented to thank you and Sony and the gamemakers for giving my life back to me To others who have life-threatening illnesses: Gaming might help. I hope that doctors and coun selors try what Dr. Browning did for me, and help others like me feel alive inside and eventually get better

Thanks again, guys.

CONTACT OPM Snail Mail

### E-mail

I just finished reading the article "Dream Machine" [OPM Issue #86], and I'd like to chime in on the issue of backward compatibility in the PS3. It may not be a top priority for the develop-Fax ers, but I think it can be important to at least a portion of the gamers. Take myself, I have nine systems already (I know I'm not alone here. Packrats, raise your hands!), Backward compatibility is a godsend for gamers like me, because it means I don't have to try and find space for a new system. Sony would do well by its loyal customers by making a PS3 that is fully backward compatible with all PlayStation titles. And make it really work this time. (Not like how I have to hang on to my PS1 because not all of my PSX games work well on my PS2.) For my

money and my space, I would consider it most beneficial to have an all-in-one system.

That was a great article in last month's issue about the PS31 However, I have to disagree on the importance of backward compatibility. A PS3 that can play PS2 and PS1 games may not mean much to sports game fans, for example (who wants to play NFL GameDay '98 when you have Madden NFL 2005?), but to RPG fans it's essential. As an RPG fan, I still have my PS1 memory card with its save points for Final Fan tasys VI-IX and Chrono Trigger, and still play them and enjoy them. Also, a backward compat ible PS3 would ensure that I could have my



With all sorts of chatter surrounding the PSP (price rumors, statements from rivals), you gamers have been typing away at each other about it. 68angst got the ball rolling by reporting, "Nintendo's head of PR says PSF is NOT a game machine; how low can Nintendo get, people??? This is too much-it's hilarious." Sony's Ken Kutaragi came right back and said, "People who want Pikachu will get the new-style DS; people who want Gran Turismo 4 will get the PSP." Everyone else started jumping in the discussion after-"I'm done with portable gaming. I don't take long rides on a bus or trein, so !: really don't have much use for either," mused knight cloak.

Edgerunner countered with, "This thing is sort of shaking out as a corporate knife fight. That's fine by me. It seems that the console makers and game companies bring their 'A' game when it's all about consumer loyalty (remember Sega vs. Nintendo?) We are the ones who end up winning. For the record, though, Kutaragi has my vote. I won't be spending any flight time messing about with Pikachu; I'll be apexing turns in GT on my

Yakityyakblah summarized the portables themselves: "This is very simple. If you want a PSP, then take a Game Boy, improve the graphics, and tie on a CD player and USB movie player (if such a thing exists). If you want a DS, take a Game Boy, tie it to a Palm Pilot and another Game Boy, put one Game Boy on the map screen, then start poking at your Palm Pilot and hope your other Game Boy does something."

### GTA OPM

Now that most of the free world has immersed itself in GTA: San Andreas. people are already gabbing about what should be in the next game. Botkiller made a modest request for "Full hard drive support." SoulTakerX has a bold wish: "Geo-Mod type stuff for the entire city. Fire a rocket into a building and a piece of it blows up." Zany black\_13 quipped, "Well, it's pretty obvious to see that the next one will be a futuristic type like GTA2. They can't do this past theme forever. And the No. 1 request I'm sure is on everyone's mind is multiplayer! Heck, they could probably even turn it into a MMOAG, massively multiplayer online action game. Imagine the

GregTheRad provided the tersest, yet best suggestion: "Robots. Definitely robots."







entire Square Enix collection on a single console; this alone would be an excellent selling point for the PS3!

There are other legitimate reasons for backward compatibility: There are still PS2 and PS1 games sitting on store shelves that new PS3 owners could buy, even if it's the first Sony console they've ever owned. And those who collect and play older videogames for kicks would be able to do so on a single console

A videogame console that's not backward compatible is like a color TV that can't play black and white movies.

In your November issue, one of the articles is about the PS3, and one of the bigger font-size quotes says, "It's not necessary to watch

ticked me off. The only reason I bought a PlayStation 2 was to play GTA3, Vice City, Mar vel vs. Capcom 2, and watch DVDs. Buying a PS2 eliminated the need to buy another machine for watching DVDs, and I could still play my favorite games on it

### WELCOME TO 1995!



THE ONLY MAG WITH PLAYABLE DEMOS



# IN THE ZONE

I just they at the KWarne dome and was mildly impressed; the smoke effects were stellar. My problem: SERIOUS aliasing problem. lems—need to get rid of those jaggies (which I'm hoping they dit to a significant degree). The controls were a little tough to get us to, but once I did, it flowed smeathly. I might rent it once or tw ZEROAEROPLANE33 via the message board

I was expecting Medal of Honor-like gameptay but got something that dumb. Let me warn you, though, the action is intense. TIGERMAN4002

Killzone was cool, but what's with the demo resetting? That suck game? The art direction was amazing, though, and it was fairly hard. Well...no it wasn't. The shield was too damage absorbed. LUMINOUSAETHER

via the message board









would like to point out. First of all, you should know that I do not own a PS2; however, I do own a new PS1. I got it last Christmas as a gift. For years I've been interested in the PlayStation franchise, and now I own one. But there are some major disappointments from your magazine that I've noticed. The main problem, I think, is that the original PlayStation is not mentioned enough. Now, of course I realize that my system is very old and not many new, exciting features are left to be made for it compared to the PS2, but I still feel that it is a noteworthy system, and I am asking that you post more lists and reviews about it because I cannot find much news on my system almost anywhere. The PS2 is a revolutionary system, and I will seriously consider buy ing one once the price comes down a tad bit more, but why must this magazine feel it must post only PS2 stuff? I only ask that you post more things about my system, considering its place in videogame history is huge!

I realize that this letter will probably not affect the magazine's content despite any of my single pleadings, but I feel that I must tell you this, considering your magazine's reviews and ratings for my games usually prove right and that is why I like this magazine. So, I hope you will do something about this, but if not, well, perhaps I really need to buy a PS2 instead of hold ing out for my aging system. Thank you and please write back a reply or show results in your magazine if you wish

### GTA- SA IS KID-FRIEN. L.

I picked up my preordered copy GTA. San Andreas on release day at the local Rhino Video Games, but before I could enjoy it, my 7-month old daughter Elexis got to it

Well, finally, Sammy releases Sammy vs. Capcom in arcades in Tokyo, Japan. While we don't know if the game will ever come to the States, there are a lot of games that I'd still like to see:

- 1) Sammy vs. Capcom
- 2) Sammy vs. SNK
- 3) SNK vs. Capcom 2: Final Chaos
- 4) Namco vs. Sega
- 5) Tecmo vs. Sega 6) Namco vs. Tecmo
- 7) Marvel vs. DC
- 8) Marvel vs. Capcom 3
- 9) Capcom vs. DC 10) Midway vs. Studio Graante
- 11) EA vs. Vivendi Universal 12) Sega vs. Nintendo
- 13) Street Fight 4: Battle of the World

I thought my book was stolen but infact it was just late I allso got an idea put A tracking device on the books with their address on it to tell one frome another

P.S Vance Brown Junior think you for your

### CAREER COUNSELING

Q. Hey, what's up, OPM? I'm a high school student and was thinking about a future career. Videogames have always been a big part of my life. During my time in school, writing has always been something I'm good at. I was just curious to know how to become a writer in OPM. Could someone help me out? Steve Burns vie e-mail

A. Normally, we would reply to this typical question with an answer along the lines of "Stay in school until you feel too cool for school" and "Learn to read-n-rite real good." But today, our advice for breaking into the gaming press is: "Drink up, son, drink up." Milk, that is. What did you think we meant?

### PASSION OF THE MEI

Q. Do you guys know Mel Gibson's phone number? I have always wanted to chat with him. He's ever so brilliant, Thanks! FREEDOM!

A. This will become one of those hilaflously rare moments when we answer questions with other questions. This time, we ask, "Why would you want to talk to Mel after the controversial travesty that was Man without a Face?"

### **BREAK TIME**

Q. What happened to Chrono Break?

A. It died before it could even be born.

MOVIES MOVIES MOVIESI
Q. I was searching for movie info for Silent Hill and Metal Gear Solid, and I saw that BOTH ideas were being pitched. Do you know any-, thing about this?!

Nick Peer via e-mail

A. Silent Hill was optioned and is in preproduction right now. Metal Gear Solid wasn't. Kojima would be crying in his beer if he weren't laughing because he's already a multimillionaire.



### BLOG OF THE MONTH

1 . . . .

1 . 7 . . . [

### CLUB OF THE MONTH

# "The alert level has been raised to RED!"

"Scored 9.0, 9.5 And 10 Out Of 10. Awarded Editor's Choice: Gold"
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

"MGS3 Looks Astounding, From Its Inspiration To Its Story To Its Gameplay."

-GameSpy.Com

"5 Out Of 5"

-Official PlayStation Magazine

"10 Out Of 10"

-PlayStation Magazine

"The Finest Installment In Konami's Acclaimed Stealth-Espionage Series." -Electronic Gaming Monthly

# METAL GEAR SOLID 3







S-no





ONEY ON PERYSTELL ON

KONAMI

# THIS TIME THE DESTRUCTION IS PERSONAL.







PlayStation 2

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Take on fellow destructophiles from across the nation. Upgrade weapons to ridiculous levels of firepower. Nuke enemies and friends alike in the single-player and split-screen multiplayer modes. Blast, whip, electrocute or melt your way through amazing new galaxies. So lock, load and gather the troops. You've got some destroying to do.





# WHAT YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING NEXT YEAR

- GOO OF HAR
- A CONTROL OF THE PARTY OF THE P
- AREA 51
- Can you handle th
- Money changes everything

  CETTING THE CRL

  The games industry is not an all-male revu

  THE LIST





Vivar i Bros interactive i

OPM Can you explain Warner Bros.' new licensing policy?

JASON HALL We want to improve the overall quality of games that are associated with Warner Bros. Essentially, in its roughest terms, the licens ing we're working with needs to achieve at least a 70 percent aggregate [reviews] average, and that average can be computed a number of ways if they want to use a site like Gamerankings or Metacritic, [they can]. In some cases, we've had companies choose five or six major sites and then create an average from those that we all agree on. The whole point is to have some sort of measure other than sales to denote quality and for them to hit a minimum standard

OPM. What was the final straw that made you want to implement such a policy?

JH I'm new to the organization. I got here in January from the videogame industry—I founded a company called Monolith Essentially, I've seen over the last decade how publishers have handled these proper ties. I also have a lot of experience dealing with publishers and developers because Monolith Productions is a development house, and I understand the very nature of how change needs to occur if you're trying to create positive change from a quality perspective

So when I got to Warner Bros., we all sat down and had a discussion about what's important to the studio. And what's important to the studio is that the properties that it owns are viewed as premium in whatever space they're taken into, so when they take a major film like *The Matrix* and move it to TV, it's handled in a premium fashion. I know intrinsically that film-licensed videogames are viewed as secondary to organial properties

Let's say you're looking at the shelf and see a box for a film-licensed game and a box for an original game. You're assuming that the film-licensed game is exploitive by nature, and therefore it's of subpar quality when compared to an original one. Ninety percent of the reviews for a film-based videogame—if it's a good game—they always say, "Wow, con sidering it's a film licenses...." I think people are so surprised by it

For Warner Bros. to preserve its future, it's important that the properties it has are premium in the space they're taken into. Each time you play a videogame associated with Warner Bros., it needs to be perceived as high quality. There are a number of steps to get there, and it's not all one sided, it's not so much that they come up and ask for the license and we ask for the 70 percent and we're done. There are a number of things Warner Bros. has to live up to on its side in order for that policy to remain in effect. For instance, if you're a licensee and you don't get the script supposed to ship, you can't make a good game. It's not the developers' fault and you can't hold them to some sort of policy, so it's a two-way

street on this. If Warner Bros. doesn't live up to its promised obligations, then the policy can't be enforced

Well, let's say both parties have lived up to their end of the agree ment—going into the release, you think it's going to do well, but it doesn't receive good reviews. Don't you think you're taking a risk by depending on what reviewers think?

You'd think so when you phrase it like that, but it turns out that because videogames are reviewed like consumer products and not like moves, it's a big difference. If games were reviewed like movies, this kind of system couldn't work because no matter how hard you try, you cannot consistently get the same rating. Look at The Matrix The first Matrix move got reviewed one way and the second Matrix movie didn't get reviewed the same way, but all of the elements were the same. Everything was the same, but the story was moved forward. Now look at something like Madden. EA can repeatedly get a minimum rating each time because there's a certain set of features that is expected of a particular videogame in a particular genre, and if you hit it, you're able to sustain an aggregate average.

What's interesting is—and we did all kinds of analysis on this before we implemented it—let's say two movies come out and they're both sci ence-fiction movies. One is Star Wars and the other is Gattaca. Star Wars.

# "WE WANT A MEASURE OTHER THAN SALES TO DENOTE QUALITY."

has spacesh ps, jumps to lightspeed, and lightsabers, so *Gattaca* would get trashed because people would ask, "How can you have a space movie without spaceships?" Now in the videogame space, they'il do contemporary comparisons all day long. In *Grand Theft Auto*, you have the ability to open a car door, but in la *GTA* clonel you can't open a door, so the clone automatically gets downgraded two points.

If you have a reviewer that gives the game a 6 out of 10 but the general public thinks it's a really great game and it sells really well, whom do you give the priority to—the reviewer or the consumer?

No one reviewer can move the aggregate. You would have to pay off 20 or 30 major gaming entities across the world, not just in North America, to throw off the average. It's not like the game comes out and we instantly count the first reviews. We wait a number of months after the game's launch for the world to have decided. Reviewers in Sweden are going to feei differently than reviewers elsewhere. On the average, it's reflective on the general perception of quality, so if you look at something like Enter the Matrix, it has an average of 80 or 67, and that's pretty much what it was. Certainly, there are some reviews in there that give it 90s and there are reviews that give it 20s—it's all over the place. But it actually turns out to be a decent system.



It's important to know that there isn't an automatic penalization (against licensees). Yes, they'll be economically penalized if they don't meet the standard, but we're not interested in trying to get more money out of it. The last thing we want to do is penalize anyone, because it's bad for relations. We always reserve the right to waive the penalty. What if the developers try a daring design? Like PaRappa the Rapper—reviewers could look at it and say it's horrible, but you don't want to penalize the developers for creativity and trying to stretch design. If it turns out that people just don't like it, then that's a different argument.

OPM. So there is an internal mechanism that determines game quality?

JM Absolutely, Let's say someone has a game that comes in at 60, so we'll have a meeting with the publisher and talk about it. We'll say, "You know, guys, you couldn't get Pierce Brosnan fast enough, so that ruined us, and this is the cataclysmic effect it had on our game." We're looking specifically for exploitive behavior where the game isn't quite ready enough, and we know it and they know it, but they want to ride that marketing campaign so bad that they put it out anyway. They could do that before because there was not penalty. There was nothing to lose that way. Now, if they go into it knowing that they're going to score under (the requirement), it turns the economics upside down because it makes more sense for them to invest more into the product and make it better.

OPM Is that what happened with Catwoman?

JH Catwoman, as a deal, existed before I got here, and when we put this policy into effect, we decided not to change deals made in the past. That kind of thing can't happen now, but it was already well in motion by the time we got around to changing a number things about Warner Bros. and the way it handles the interactive space. Although the game was not the

# "I WOULD NOT HAVE LET CATWOMAN BE MADE."

game it should've been, EA worked very hard in a very compressed time scale. If I was here back then, I would not have let the deal be made, because there wasn't enough time to make the game.

OPM Do you ever second-guess the decision to let EA handle Batman?

JH No, because I feel like the Catwoman deal shouldn't have been made just based on the Itime framej alone. It's not really EA's fault that Catwoman was what it was. I think the blame for that one is shared equally among everyone involved with the product. On the other hand, there's much more time for Batman, and it's a different name.

All new deals will have the quality standard moving forward. There are no exceptions, so any new announcement you see coming from us—it's all in there. We're not going to push our licenses on anyone, land if it turns out! that no one wants to sign up for them, then we'll have to make the games ourselves. Until the idea of this policy came up, there was no forum for a studio and a publisher to discuss why a game was bad. What happened is that they'd ask for a property and say they would do great. Then they'd make the game and say it was bad, and the studio would say it was bad. There was no contractual obligation to have a discussion.

I've worked on licenses las a developer) with Allens vs. Predator, so I know what it's like to work with a studio. We changed here at Warner Bros. to accommodate publishing needs so publishers can produce the best game that they can, but don't ask us to do all this work if you're not willing to back it up. «

### MONOLITHIC RÉSUMÉ

Monolith Productions the company founded by Jason Half, may not beterribly familiar to PS2 owners, but it's been a major force in the PC vorld for years. The company was responsible for top-tier first-person shooters like No One Lives Forever, Tron 2.0. and Aliens vs. Predator 2 eventually licensing out its LithTech engine for use in other big FPS titles. The company is currently developing The Matrix Online, due for release in 2005.



JATA'S INLAMI NEWS IN BRIEF



THE EVIL RETURNS

in a surprising turn of events, Capcom has announced that Resident Evil 4 will be coming to PS2 in 2005. The game was formerly announced as a GameCube-only project, but citing the current financial situation of the company and the market in general, Capcom decided to make a PS2 version as well. "We have come to this conclusion after deliberating over customers' needs, market environments, and various opinions from stakeholders such as shareholders and investors," the company said in a written statement. "We hope that this decision will create new demand and expand [Resident Evil's) fan base. "At the same time, we also expect that the decision will bring about additional revenue base."



ORDER THE HIT

IO Interactive is working on yet another Hitman game, this one called Hitman: Blood Money. Agent 47 will be the hunted instead of the hunter this time as some unknown force continues to murder members of his contract agency. As the title suggests, money plays an important role in the game, affecting what you do and see. Additionally, the game is running on a new version of IO Interactive's Glacier engine, so you can expect it to have even more visual bells and whistles than the previous Hitman game. Blood Money is scheduled for release on PlayStation 2 in spring 2005.



THE FORCE IS STRONG

Be prepared for a Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Stith multimedia bombardnent in May. The game, in development at The Collective and based on the film, is a third-person action extravaganza following the adventures of Obi-War Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker. Both will have access to lightsabers and a variety of force powers that they can use over the course of their journey, which will culminate in an epic lightsaber duel between the two characters. If you think that's a spoiler, well, here's another one for you: Darth Vader is Luke's father.

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THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION 2

ISUN

IMON

ITUES

IMED

ChoroQ, Kuon, and Street Fighter Arcade

are now available for

ITHUR

your gaming pleasure.

IFRI

ISAT 04

If you liked Hero, then go check out director Yimou's newest film— House of Flying Daggers hits theaters this weekend.

Battle Assault 3, Mega Man X8, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, and Viewtiful Joe 2 are all in stores this week



Last night was the first of eight crazy nights. Happy Hanukkah



Don't have enough money for the avalanche of games that came out in the past month? Go see Ocean's Twelve to ge some quick moneymaking tips.



Huge lines are filing out of every gaming store in Japan-PSP comes out today.



Is OPM the best gaming magazine in the country? Watch the

Video Game Awards tomorrow night on Spike TV (hosted by Snoop Dogg) to find out



Hardcore racing fans across the country fake being sick-Gran Turismo 4 is in stores



tomorrow night at the Key Club. Listen closely and you might hear some of those Simlish

lyrics.



Watch Jim Carrey in Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, then check out the PS2 game of the same name.



15



It's good to be a sci-fi geek: Battlestar Galactica and The Twilight Zone Season 1 hit store shelves today, following Star Trek, Star Trek: Voyager, and Quantum Leap DVD releases ear



Only three shopping days till Christmas. Have you picked up Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal and Katamari Damacy for loved ones yet?



Meet Ben Stiller's movie parents Barbra Streisand and Dustin Hoffman in Meet the Fockers.

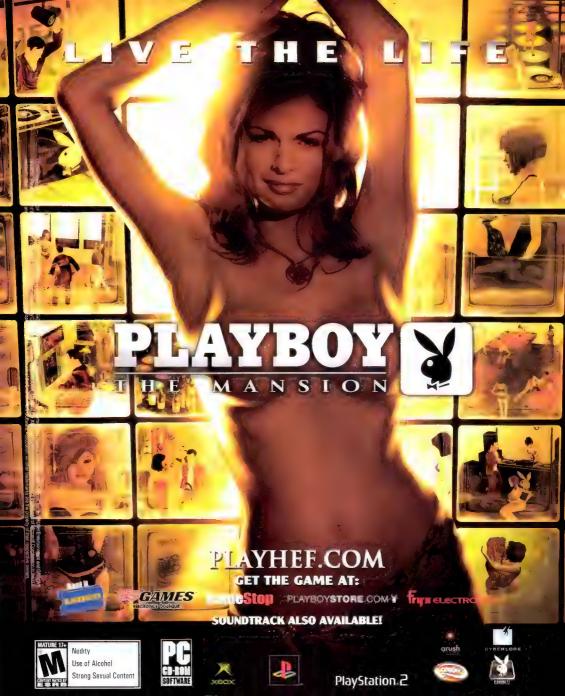






Dick Clark wants you to have a rockin' New Year's Eve.







# GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE. THREE-QUARTER INCH HOLES IN THE HEAD KILL PEOPLE.



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DISHING OUT PUNISHMENT HAS NEVER BEEN MORE FUN. GAMEDAILY

# THE PUNISHER

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PlayStation 2













Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

cold HM, MARIS, The polyer in the first term is the second from the control of the cold of



# DECENT GAMES ALL YEAR ROUND, WE'RE PROMISED

Ol Spilmer Call Chaus Theory

02 Area 51

03 Batman Begins 04 Brothers in Arms 05 God of War

O6 Champions: Return to Arms

**07** Death by Degrees DB Destruy All Humans

O9 Devil May Cry 3 10 Fullmeta) Alchemiat 11 Geteway: Black Monday

12Barkwatch

13 Hitman: Blood Money 14Killer 7

15 Mercenaries 16 Midnight Club 3 17 Nanobreaker

18 NARC 19 NFL Street 2.

20 Phanton Crash 2050 21 Playboy, The Manson 22 Project Snowblind

23 Resident Evil Outbreak File #2 24 Rise of the Kasai 25 Shadow of Rome

26 Spy vs. Spy 27 Tekken 5

28 Stolen 29 Suikoden IV.

∃O Super Money &all OX 31 Star Wars Ep. III

32The Punisher 33 Time Splitters FP

34 Virtua Quest

35 Xenosaga II

36 Winnie the Pool























The 2004 holiday garning season was just about as good as it gets for PS2 awars. The confluence of risignistic in the October to December period rise unlike anything that's ever happened leafors. When you factor in the whole garning market, with the leunch of the Nitrendo DS, the ultimate propression of Xbourness in the shape of Hallo 2, and Ninterdo's last-disk intermpt to make the GarneCube cool with literated Prime 2, it was a true wallet-buster. So what now'r is that it? Do we have to sit it out and weit for the DS2 before swill see aware of the season mentioned. With no make the Campac of the season mentioned with the property of the position of the positio the PS3 before we'll see gemes of the same magnitude? With so many riple-A games just launched, is there anything to look forward to ne years for translately, it would seem so, and the first batch of continued years for translately, it would seem so, and the first batch of continued games can be seen in the consenshots we have here. Starting on page see've picked out five games that we expect will make the biggest noise the first part of the year. We gathered a group of executives from around the game business to discuss the coming year and a session when do not such a packed holiday season.

"It's a bit of a misnomer to say Christmas is the time to launch map," explains Michaely's senior vice president of marketing, Stoye so. "The best time to launch a such as the property of th

son. "The best thing to say is that Christmas is the best time to launch hig franchise-game sequels. That's franchise sequels, not just sequels. So if you have GTA on your hands, there's some upside to being in the Christmas season, as it becomes a retail event. These titles would do well regardless of when they ship, but they tend to do slightly better by hitte Her mark in the holiday season when nongamers are out shopping.

Kide' games are good at that time too server are selected to prove any volume in the fourth quarter.

Eidor vice president of mereting;

wand more in more than a first true for any consumer product for the most part."

Holidays are huge for all the obvious reasons," explains Electronic life vice precident of corporate communications, and though the product of corporate communications, and though the product of the product of

# THERE ANYTHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR?

He goes on to explain an aspect of the holiday buying season that you ney not be awere of. "Typically, the two vession after Christmas was be than the two weeks before," Brown declares. Why is that? Is it simply a nattor of cold, hard cash as a holiday gift? "Well, yee." he concedes "to be other big thing is that they are.

where his day of the control of the



























series, even of their sect immeridous quarte. There are always exception to the rule, like the occesional title destined to be a frenchise, like GTA3 or Splinter Cell, but this is the exception, not the rule. Publishers that can be honest about where their title sits in the hierarchy of releases can really inne-tune things for maximum success. But how many publishers really size capable of honestly evaluating their game's place in the hierarchy? Just look at the games reviewed this month and ask yourself how reamight be better served by a gentle nudge into next year.

The games business has grown to the point where a blockbusing the

# WHY DON'T WE SEE A STEADY FLOW OF HIGH-QUALITY GAMES?

can be released at any time of year," argues Jay Cohen, vice president of publishing for Ubisoft. "To say it is perilous to release a game in the first quarter is an antiqueted point of view that compares the entertainment software business to the toy industry." Cohen adds. "There just not the definitive case anymore.

"What we can't ever forget is the historons gemes don't stop buying sed playing games, ever," says Brown. "The real opiphany for us at EA was when we released Medal of Honor. Frontline in May a couple of years ago. Everyone told us, "Nobody plays games in the summer." Nonsense! The average age of our consumers is 27; it's not like they conform to this lettion that they're diving outside to play on shall swing set when the executive is nice and they go cout of achieve. May is tag because you have let of people graduating from school and college, and then June is Father - Bay. They call the period 'dade and grade.' I dign't call it that, the

"The single most important factor industring gare, while is a high riquelity of the garest baself," states John Googhegan, vice president of my facting at LucasArts. "Timing is secondary. That being said, if you're condent you have a strong title, you next look to when you can successfully showcase it. Mercenaries is a new IP, so we wanted to launch it at a time when we'd have a better chance of grabbing people's attention."

"Great games backed by strong leunches can shine early in the yallMidway's Allieon states. It's clear that the holidays can actually hurt a for quality games because they had to battle for the attention of gamers are extremely noisy time." he says. "So where this choice of timing cominto play as an important release strategy is when you objectively knowyou've got a very high quality new game that's not a sequel. Generally,
you'll come to the conclusion that Q1 or Q2 is better for the first iteration
if that plays out to the positive and it becomes a success, the sequel will
be best with a release around the holiday season in whether we want to
low-up comes."

So, why don't we see a standy love of high-quarky general through the year? "There is a steady flow of high-quality games throughout the year," argue Ubisan'ts Cohen. "However, the problem seems to be that there's just not an abundance of them. Many publishers do not have maken one or two triple-A titles in their entire lineup, but have all asset of have a strong title in their lineup during the holidays."

t has taken a while, hit you are seeing hig release



Tekken (27) has had a pretty lousy time of it on PS2. Once the darling of the fighting-game scene, it has deteriorated with each new iteration since Tag Tournament. The biggest challenge for Takken 5 is whether the "two guys thumping eacl other" formula has already peaked.



























rer Cell, and Hitman: Contracts all ship in the first half of the year. This is definitely becoming more common."

definitely becoming more construct.

A lot of games on the release schedule for early 2005 were originally sheduled to ship in late 2004, is this the first sign that game releases the dispersed more sensibly throughout the year? The decision to many decreases into January 2005 was made during the summer of 2004 when we had a good understanding of what the competitive environment of the competitive en reputed look like," LucasArts' Geoghegen explains. "We knew we would nave a hit with Battlefront in September, and we had big plans for the sequel to Knights of the Old Republic, so it made sense to launch Mercentella to Knights of the Old Republic, so it made sense to launch Mercentella to Knights of the Old Republic, so it made sense to launch Mercentella to Knights of the Old Republic, so it made sense to launch Mercentella to Knights of the Old Republic, so it made sense to launch Mercentella to the Control of the Old Republic of the Ol

control of highest control of the control of the control have a clear shall be attached where the control have a clear shall be a control of the control of suite of those two high-profile releases. The good thing about it for consumers is that we added an additional 12 weeks to the production scheule to polish the game and get multiplayer online dieled in just right. which is great for PS2 owners, as there are not really many good FPS choices that work well online for more than eight players.

Eidos' Baldwin describes the same challenge with regard to me re-stooter from Crystal Dynamics, Project Snowblind, "The decision was raide to push it into 2005 shortly after E3 less year," his ears, "We know we had a competitive shooter, but with the glid of these servings and in 2004, we decided we would rather give it some room.

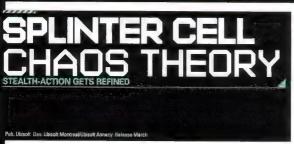
summer," Ubisoft's Cohen admits. "We knew that in order to deliver the features that the franchise demands, it was necessary to spend more timengineering and refining it so that it lives up to the promise."

So, it's aafe to say 2005 will be quite different from what we've been at to recently? "Perhaps," ponders Cohen. "Console transition years along providing time and easin to throw conventional thinking out the wislow. With new hardware being introduced at various points throughout the conventional thinking to the second providing the second provided the second prov we year and prices declining on current-generation software and he ware, it is unlikely that the typical cycles will be evident in 2005.

# EASES BE DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

The games industry does itself a disservice by crowding so many titles to the holiday season," LucasArts' Geoghegan says, sbly concluding classussion. "The heart mentality only results in service overgrazing. The an OK way to raise cattle, but not a sustainable model for videogament SIOS will be different. The majority of genera are spending their hard-samed dollars on videogemes during the fourth querier right now, bill, look at the movie inclustry. They've successfully built a business argum-soo major selling periods: summer and fall. At the same time, they are able to release a lot of smaller but still successful films during the infe-seriod. The videogems inclustry will eventually move in this direction. Believe me, it won't have a choice, economics will force the move."





Admit it, stealth fans: Eventually, you're going to get tired of eating defenseless woodland creatures and endlessly switching camouflage Eventually, you're going to want to step back out of the '60s and move into a more modern setting. Eventually, you're going to want to test your stealth skills against other humans

Never fear, Ubisoft has got your number. (It's "three" or, at least, it would be if the Spinter Cell series followed normal numbering conventions.) With Chaos Theory, the nevest entry in the near-future adventures of lone operative Sam Fisher, Ubisoft hopes to further refine the superspy steath gameplay that's made the franchise such a success, and in the process, deal out one of the key titles of 2005

This refining process goes a bit beyond the standard "new levels; weapons gadgets" routine, though, "While the concept of stearth action remains the same," says Producer Mathieu Ferland, "almost everything else has been changed new graphics engine, new sound engine, rag-doll physics, all new A., new level design, new animations, and the 'closer process."



than ever' system, which forces players to operate in extreme proximity

You can think of this "c oser than ever" system as being roughly analo gous to MGS3's close quarters combat. Sam now has a repertoire of up. close-and-personal attacks in addition to his grab-and-interrogate moves of the past. He can now floor enemies with a well-placed knee, toss them over ledges or balconies, snap their necks while hanging upside down, even dispatch them with a silent knife thrust. "One of our main focuses with Chaos Theory is proximity," says Ferland. "We wanted the player to experience the thrill of operating undetected just inches away from hos tiles. Stealth is still extremely important, but now players will realize that getting closer and closer to the enemy in a dangerous situation while fully in control—is a very rewarding feeling

The knife (which will serve as a tool as well as a weapon) isn't the only addition to Sam's arsenal, either He'll have access to a variety of new attachments for the modular SC-20K assault rifle that can be switched out as the situation demands in order to increase firing accuracy, shot power, and so on. He'll also be able to use new thermoptic camouflage to render himself all but invisible, seek out hidden hostiles with a heartbeat detector, and protect himself from noxious fumes with a gas mask

# SAM CAN SNAP ENEMIES' NECKS WHILE HANGING UPSIDE DOWN.

But even a well equipped superspy like Sam Fisher can use a little help from his friends every now and then, so the game includes an all new co-op mode in which players team up in person or online to help advance the main story of the game. Thus, many of the new tactics are cooperative in nature. You might be boosting your teammate up to a











### NEW TOYS

Chaos Theory includes a veriety of new weapons and gadgets, both online and off. Among them:

AND WARKING RIFLS: I on the XMB prototyr

in under six pounds: omizable washool

U.S. Army as p

G-20K MODULAR ASSAULT WEAPON SYSTEM This Dispact rifle, based on this is Towarid P2000.3 102216 Subpressor and el

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The UKL Unious Proposition of the presence of human Proposition Proposition (1986)

CHAOS THEORY'S PLOT (IN 75 WORDS

OR LESS)
In 2008, weapons enginee
Brices Morganholt is kidnapped. Sam Fisher is see
to rescue him, and he discevers that the kidnappin
was organized by Morger
holt's former partner,
Abbahim Zhardanhi Lebes

the United States and Jepan are stacked with technology known only to Morganitot and Zherkezhi, prompling the United States to step up patrole in the Kores Statit. North Kores responds with force, and Same is sent in to calim things down. The's where





pipe that would be otherwise out of reach, for example, or reaching down to pull him up a wall he wouldn't be able to scale on his own. This is, Ferland tells us, "a new kind of collaborative gameplay that requires and rewards trust and cooperation between two players. We devised new moves, environments that need two players, and special gadgets that foster collaboration."

Meanwhile, while reexamining the franchise with an eye toward fur thering cooperation, the developers realized that the previous games were fairly linear in nature throughout the single-player mode, so they decided to do something to change that. "We wanted to remove the frus tration of getting a 'game over' for missing a noncritical objective," says Ferland. "A nonlinear structure forgives the player for such failures. Another change is allowing players to decide which objective to accomplish first; it's more fun, and it delivers more replay value. It's not just about creating multiple paths through a level, but really enabling players to use their preferred style."

This idea of a personal style extends to competitive online play, too Anyone who goes online will be able to use an array of new weapons, gadgets, and moves. Want an example? "Mercs can now knock a spy to the ground," says Ferland "place a foot on his neck, and verbally taunt him before letting him pass out or moving in for the kill " And leveling the playing field between sples and mercs is just the beginning; both sides will have a vastly expanded hand-to-hand arsenal, many of the cooperative gadgets and moves from the co-op mode.. and a whole repertoire of new ways to taunt opponents

It's never a small thing to rebuild a successful franchise from the ground up; when it works, it can make the developers look like genuses...and when it doesn't, it can sour the entire franchise. In the case of Chaos Theory, it looks ...re Ubisoft is approaching the renovation from the right direction, keeping the successful bits and sanding down the rough spots. We won't know how it turns out until March—but for now, it sounds like a pretty interesting plan \*C.

### CHAOS THEORY: THE SIX-POINT SUMMARY

- Sem is meaner.
   Multiplayer is bigger.
- Multiplayer is bigge
   Mercs are stroneer.
- 4. Lovels are more nenlinear.
- 5. Gadgets are coole 6. Story is weirder.











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PlayStation 2







PLAY IN DURS







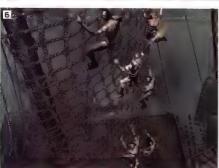


# LEGENDARY BITCH

The Hydra was the offdeath) and Pollus (one of the Titoris). Har number of heads values, ranging from five to 180, but nine cles killed her, he had to use a torch to couterize each nock after slicing off the head to prevent a nits place.

- 2 A lot of the combat training on the first level takes place against the many heads of the Hydra. Here, Kratos uses the blades of chaos to battle against the first head. Once the head is stunned, the player will have to complete a button-pushing sequence to kill it. Since the button sequences are randomly generated each time through, reflexes need to be sharp.
- 3 Here, as Kratos faces the Hydra's second head, he can allow himself to be caught in its mouth if the player can successfully complete a minigame, in this case by pressing the Circle button in a Track and Field-style speed mash, he can then deliver a critical blow to the Hydra's head. If he fails, then it's bye-bye for Kratos.
- 4 While the game is definitely combat driven. there are also some mental challenges as well. Here, Kratos faces archers who are attacking him from the top of a ledge that's out of his reach. Somehow he must get a box over to the wall so he can jump up and kill them—the only problem is that the flaming arrows they shoot keep setting the box on fire....







BACKGROUND

- 5 Kratoe uses Poseidon's rage on another head. There are four to five magic attacks available in the game, and all can be upgraded. While some upgrades will simply make the attack more powerful, others will open up new options. For example, a powered-up Medusa's head can be used like a stun bornb on a roomful of enemies or targeted to destroy an individual.
- We've seen Kratos pull himself up cliffs and swing on ropes strung across bottomless caverns; here, he's scaling the rigging of the ship. There's a lot of climbing and maneuvering, but hat doesn't stop Kratos from being able to attack. Even when you're on the ropes, you're able to swing blades at enemies or grab them, bash in their heads, and throw them down.
- 2 This giant daddy Hydra head is the final boss in this level, and he's not exactly in the best of moods—when he opens his mouth to roar, the blast of breath and noise makes the mast (and Kratos) sway unsteadily. You'll heve to go a few rounds before you defeat him, and it's going to take more than just your blades. Hint: The mast comes into play.

# CREATOR



en this laden with blockbuster sequels, it's unbowel, sind refres ing—to see a new game that's unattached to a franchise. We sait down with God of War Producer David Jaffe to talk about Greek mythology, agamble of starting from scratch, and Vegas lounge legend Tom Jones.

OPM Why a Greek mythology game new? Hew do you go from the Metal to this? Were you always interested in this subject matter?



DAVID JAFFE After Twisted Metal: Black, my boss was like: "What do you want to make next?" I've always loved Greek mythology and I've always loved the action-adventure genre. Why not roll it all into one game! Sony is great about letting us follow our passions. With SCEA games, it's clear the developers really. love what they are doing. I think that is why you see such unique and polished titles from Sony first party.

OPM What did you learn from provious andsevers (the Twisted Manual franchise) that helped you out on the development of God of War?

DJ. The main thing I learned from working on the Twisted Metal franchise was [to] iterate, Iterate, iterate. Making a game is like editing a movie. You have to try all kinds of different configurations, move things around, cut things out, until you end up with the game you feel in your gut. So come ing into God of War, I told myself that being a good game director is not about being liked or popular. It's about protecting the player's experience above all else. If something is not fun, you have to fix it. No matter what The good nave is, lots of the team baught into this series philosophy.

OPM Obviously, you drew a lot of content inspiration from sources like The Iliad and The Odyssey. Bid you have any main sources of inspiration for gameplay elements?

DJ Some of the gamepley inspirations are obvious: Devil May Cry, ion Onimusha. However, I also drew inspiration from more obscure games from the 16-bit era, like Flashback and Out of This World. Those games, really felt like stories that you got to star in! I am disappointed in most action-adventure games today. You read the back of the box and they promise this fantastic adventure. But in reality, in most games, all you deis run from room to room hitting things. Now the combat in some of these games may be fentastic, but it's really about the mechanics and less about the adventure. So with God of War, I wanted the game to feel like an epic adventure. To that end, I pushed for lots of level variety so that players felt like they were always seeing and doing something new Me also worked hard to tie some of the character development and storytelling into the gameplay itself. I think these are the elements the make games feel like experiences.

OPM Waster that was to be a few and the

BJ This kind of question always into me, because it assumes that games are products that need a list of "never before seen" features to get some one interested. But I don't agree with that. We got raves coming out of this year, but NO ONE thought we were innovative. And, for this game,
I'm very cool with that. Because EVERYONE thought we were damn fun. And that is really the point. So if you are looking for innovation, go play Katamari Damacy. If you want to have a savage, brutal adventure, give God of War a try.

OPM: Were there any mythological or many and a second and the game that you weren't able to?

DJ. We really tried to do the greatest him of Greek mythology in terms ... gods and monsters. While we may have missed a few here or there, we got all of the best-known mythical creatures into the game. There is one presture that we all really wanted but just did not have time to put in: Me'll get her in the next one if we are so lucky to make a part two

OPM From what we've seen of the game, Kneen seems as a connite antihero. Was that an intentional choice?

the only intent was to drasts a character that would allow players by unleash their dark side, I wanted Kratos to represent the raw, savage, and malistic side that we all have. But hero and antihero were not things I worried about. Kratos was designed with the goal of letting players exemrience-and revel in-a single emotion: rage.

OPM If you had to compare God of Wer to another videogame come out this cycle, which would you say it most resembles?

B.J. There is not one game to compare it to. We have the action of De-May Cry, the puzzles of Ico, the in-game storytelling of Prince of Persis. Many of the individual elements are clearly inspired by other games, but we are mixing those elements in a unique way. It all adds up to making Soci of War feet [more] like an epic adventure and tees like a game

# "KRATOS WAS DESIGNED TO LET THE PLAYER REVEL IN RAGE."

DPM Will we be able to unlock are and Technical Michigan be-Kratos to tool around in?

Gal Nah, it's a good idea, but ... were a second, I can't lie. It's not a good idea. So the answer is no. Honestly, I really wanted *God of War* to have no connection with Twisted Metal. I just needed to know if I could make other kinds of games. I mean, I understand car combat down to its core. But I've never done a game like God of War. And I really need to know # I'm a one-trick pony. So I tossed away the Twisted Metal crutches and was pretty adamant about there being no secrets or goodies related to the Twisted series. There was an alternate Sweet Tooth costume for Kratos, but I asked the artists to take it out. This is an expensive game. imagine my career will live or die by it. Scary as that is, I wanna know # succeeded on its own merits.

Office What's your females Fill, game to have put it the good year.

D.J. Onimusha 3, although I thought it is a second and a fine of up: The Suffering from Midway.

OPM We hear you're a Tom Jones has been consider making a great about a Vegas lounge act?

BJ. Dude, Tom Jones is AMAZING! The guy is like 60 and he's get three hot 20-year-old chicks tossing panties on the stage! Go, Tom! Maybe I'll put him in God of War II as Zeus. That would be sweet. «

# THE EPIC JAK TRILOGY IS COMING. REST ASSURED, IT WON'T END LIKE THIS.







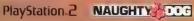


















# MIDNIGHT CLUB 3 DUB EDITION WHERE BEAUTY AND SPEED COME TOGETHER

Pub. Rockstar Dev. Rockstar San Diego Release Q1 2005

You've seen them. It might have been on the street, in a parking lot, or even on television. After all, it's kind of hard to miss the blinding sheen of spinning rims or the often outrageous paint jobs of tricked-out cars.

Pick up any car magazine and you'll see countless ads for customized rims and articles showing everything from pimped-out buses to custom choppers. These kinds of modifications are the fastest-growing segment of the automotive industry, so you can understand why Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition focuses on this aspect of car culture and why Rockstar hooked up with DUB, one of the leading tuner-culture magazines. "We've been paying attention to DUB ever since they began four years ago. It became clear that they had a lock on where the customization scene was going, and we knew custom zation was going to be a nuge part of Midnight Club 3," says Jay Panek, producer of Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition "We approached them not long after Midnight Club II released and found out they were huge gamers. DUB told us they had been approached by other game companies but had turned them all down because no one was willing to be true to the culture the magazine represents. If they were going to be assocrated with a game, they wanted it done right and they wanted to be closely involved with development. This was music to our ears."



















# PIMP YOUR RIDE PUT WEST COAST CUSTOMS OUT OF BUSINESS

Obviously, customization plays a huge role in Midmaht Club 3 but we were honestly shocked to see just how much you can do Even at the very start of the game, you I get enough cash to purchase a relatively low-tier car and customize it with a few cool items. Our choice? A '64 Impala, and there was still enough money left over to buy a custom bumper a new paint op and a gold grille to make it look nice. After a few more races, we had money to buy side exhaust and nitro. (Just to give you an idea of how far the customization goes, you can ever change the color of the fire spewing from your exhaust )

As you progress through the game, you'll be able to earn money and buy more cars and do some sweet modifications to them. One of our favorites was a color whee you can unlock that lets you lay down two different layers of paint to give your car an even more unique look. The Toyota Supra we purchased later on looked great with its blue base paint, green cost sweet rims and flame graphics on the sides. There are so many options to choose from that you could potentially spend just as much time in the garage as you do in the actual game

DUB helped out Rockstar by giving the development team sugges tions on different aspects of the game. "[DUB has helped us in] reality checking the customization element of the game and opening doors for us in the auto and aftermarket industries," Panek adds. "[They helped us makel sure the vibe of the game was right. Early on there was a lot of real-world detail that we needed clarity on-for example, what would be the most insane but credible visual customizations that could be done to a vehicle like a '69 Charger? They also provided a lot of forward thinking in totals of value is selection. The clearest example of this is the Chrysler 300C-these days this is one of the hottest cars in the U.S. something DUB predicted a long time ago

You don't have to worry about the DUB label being nothing more than a marketing o by to immediately attract a certain type of audience. "We don't work like that," says Panek. "We don't try to appeal to a single spe cific group. Our goal is to make a game that we think is cool and fun to play. At the end of the day, it is always about the racing-making sure

# "WE'VE MOVED BEYOND THE TUNER SCENE

it's tast, competitive, and a libetive. Our goal from the beginning was to focus on where we was ted to go with the gameplay. At the same time we definitely wanted a game that represented the cutting edge of street racing and customization that's what led us to work with DUB

But in a market with so many different racing games, some of which also focus on the car modding culture, like the Need for Speed Under ground games, Midnight Club 3 needs something to stand out from the pack. The sheer number of customization options will undoubted v help. but the gameplay needs to be up to par as well. "The most crucial difference between Midnight Club 3 and the glut of other racing games is the core open-city gameplay. Other games are selling the concert of open-city racing, but when you play them, what do you get? Blocked off roads with rows of flashing arrows telling you where you have to drive and invisible bounds to keep you away from the areas that you wish you could drive on," Panek says "We've moved way beyond the tuner scene that many of our competitors are solely focused on. In addition to tuners. Midnight Crub 3 includes every kind of vehicle class that you want to race. Muscle cars, trucks, high-end sports cars, SUVs, luxury rides, and even street bikes and choppers-and all are licensed

With all the idensed cars and parts, it's obvious that Rockstar is try ing to make the game as authentic as possible, but don't expect a realistic racing sim a la Gran Turismo 4. And it's not a full-on arcade-type rac ing game like Burnout 3 either. Midnight Club 3 strikes a balance between the two subgenres. The cars handle and behave much as they would in real title, but the racing is so fast paced—especially when you get nitro-that it has an arcade feel to it. "We've played all of the racing games (and) we keep coming back to the same vision for Midnight Club 3; we wanted to create the fastest, most free form racing game possible without losing sight of the precision control and detailed real-world customization," Panek says. "Nailing that balance isn't easy, but I feel we ve pulled it off



















# DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR PINK SLIP IS?

Racing in Midnight Club 3 is divided among three cities—San Diego. Atlanta, and Detroit-each of which has a connection to the automotive world, landmarks, and a variety of other unique traits. When you drop into one of these cities for the first time, you have the option to cruise around and get an idea of what the city is like, or you can use the time to find shortcuts that could be useful during a race. When you want to race someone, you simply look at your map and find where an opponent is, drive over, and signal that you want to race During a race, you'll notice a few things. First, the cars feel like they

have some weight to them, so a huge vehicle like an H2 is relatively sluggish in comparison to something like the 300C. Ultimately, you end up developing a driving strategy of either brute force or finesse, depending on your ride. However, regardless of the car you're driving, you can still make use of the slipstream turbo that essentially gives you a free turbo boost if you manage to draft behind an opponent and fill up the turbo meter. Nitro is also very valuable, particularly when heading toward a platform that I make you go airborne. But be careful. Midnight Club 3 delivers a serious sense of speed, and you can easily careen into a building or traffic if you're not careful

### TAKE IT ONLINE

Rockster's keeping quiet 3's online features, but antly improved over the plan for the online comonest of Midnight Club hat we couldn't or didn ight Club II and pack it layer online pley, the est number of comn the mear future. The e online. Host feeture in Midnight I, there were times wher he hest would quit durrom the game, and they vould have to go back to ther again. In Midnight connected from the cur rent seesion. We've also oine, which allow players to get into existing sessions. As a result, tual city online where people can meet up with friends and explore the open sity, race, cruise, o ust hend out and check out each other's rides. There will be all sorts of rankings and stats online Once you get really good at Affidnight Club 3, you are going to want to find people that will be a challenge to best, so the linfo to do that."











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With the Killzone wave arriving and washing away, FPS fans need something new to load up. Sure, there's the next TimeSplitters game and another Medal of Honor, but there's nothing truly substantive and immediate to latch onto

Except Area 51.

Similar to Half-Life (you know your game is off to a good start when it resembles the best first-person shooter ever), Area 51 starts off as just another day on the job. Hazmat Delta was sent in earlier to decontaminate Area 51, but contact with the team has been lost. Hence, you step in as Ethan Cole, a member of Hazmat Bravo. At this point, Area 51 feels almost like a squad-based shooter. You have your buddies who frequently crack wise while shooting baddies left and right. You don't control any of them (Cole doesn't rate command), so you have to follow the whims of team leader Ramirez. Thankfully, the team members do a decent job of staying allive, taking cover positions, and blasting away. Area 51 almost







feels like Rainbow Six, but with mutated people instead of terrorists

Like in any horror movie, though, your team eventually gets picked off Just as you're getting comfortable fighting alongside your comrades, they get torn apart-literally. And not only are you left all alone, but you've been infected and mutated as a result

Area 57's arsenal mixes the traditional with the exotic. Like a certain Master Chief, Cole can dual-wield select weapons (particularly gratifying is the tearing power of two shotguns simultaneously blasting away) Besides your normal bullet ejecting firearms, there're also weird exper mental weapons, a particular favorite is the BBO, which shoots we'rd energy balls that bounce off inorganic matter and attach to organic matter before exploding. You can bounce shots around corners and flush out campers in multiplayer. Additionally, your mutant powers include a more savage melee attack, the ability to see cloaked enemies (there are some crazy infected black ops soldiers who phase in and out like the Predator),

and weird parasites you can shoot out that suck hearth from your ene mies and transfer it back to you. However, when you become a mutant, you use up mutagen, which gets regenerated by taking down other

# THE ARSENAL MIXES THE TRADITIONAL WITH THE EXOTIC.

infected enemies. This adds a tactical element to the game, as you find yourse f switching between the normal human mode and the mutant mode for different situations

All this action and mutantery is rendered gorgeously. At times, it feels as though the game sn't even made for the PS2, as Midway Studios



ALIENZ LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH—YET

Those bastard grays are all over the place. Except most of the time, you won't be fighting them. They're a bit on the wimpy side, preferring to use technology or other beings to fight you. Whenever you see a gray, you are usually either unarmed or behind bulletproof glass and can only watch them do their insidious work. Note that we said "most of the time." Creative Director Daryl Allison explains, "Basically, we just want to tease you with the grays, over and over, until you reach the moment when you can finally take one down.





# MULTIPLAYER

The most interesting piece of MP-related news is the new "expanding maps" technology Basically, maps will be made on the large side to accommodate a healthy number of players (say, up to 16). These maps have several doors and pathways. So what happens when there're only three players? Doors are locked and pathways are blocked. Yet if four players suddenly ioin the game to up the count to seven, doors start opening and more of the map is available If the remaining nine players log in, everything opens up But if 10 of those 16 players leave, doors start closing again. Basically, the map dynamically adjusts its size based on player count. Nothing else on the PS2 is really trying to use this technology; the closest is Battlefield 2 for the PC, which has a similar dynamic-map sizina system



Austin is putting all sorts of graphical hoo-ha into the game. Terminology like "projected texture," "vertex lighting," and "diffuse map" help push the game to a near-Xbox level of detail. A small but neat example is how you can shoot cloth (like, say, a flag or a curtain) and actually see right through the bullet hole. In fact, the programming team noticed that the PS2 is actually better at oversaturating colors than the other consoles. which helps give the game's weirder parts that foreign, unearthly vibe.

Storywise, Area 51 sounds like a descent into alien hell. As the game shifts from a more straightforward near-future shooter into alien territory (literally, as a clean research facility gives way to hybrid alien architecture), so too does the story get weirder. Pretty much any wacko conspiracy theory is reflected here, whether it's the Roswell crash, the alien autopsy, or the American space program. While the player experiences it in the present, the story is told in past tense. Besides cut-scenes and ingame radio chatter, Midway Studios Austin decided to add one more sto

rytelling device: vocal load times. "We wanted to give the players something more entertaining than just another load screen," comments Creative Director Jim Stiefelmaier. Hence, in between chapters, David Duchovny lends his voice talent to another piece of backstory, giving the context for the upcoming level. Even radio chatter gets bizarre, as Marilyn Manson's role as your alien "friend" Edgar calls for Manson to have his voice oversampled and delivered through corpses. Producer Zach Wood comments, "While you get your normal orders through the radio from your commander, we wanted to do something really bizarre and far out for the late game and came up with Edgar animating dead people."

The fact that Area 51 is more than just a light-gun game is surprising enough, but the solid craft being put into it, whether it's aesthetics, mood, sound, A.I., or design, makes it a significant title. There were rumors at one point of Sony trying to make Area 51 a PS2 exclusive. It's that good, and it might be the first breakout shooter of 2005 «



Language
Partial Nudity
Suggest ve Themes
Violence



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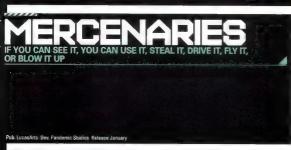
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Set for release in January, Mercenaries could prove to be very significant for a number of reasons: It will be one of the first truly spectacular and epic games of 2005; it's being developed by Pandemic, the white-hot team that previously wowed us with Star Wars Battlefront; and it's a brand-new franchise from a publisher not known for busting out the new IP very often Having dabbled in a few new ideas with only moderate success these past few years, it seemed that LucasArts was going to keep its head down and just bang out the occasional Star Wars game under new boss Jim Ward. Mercenaries is a bold move in a new direction for the company, and it is something that certainly would have been lost in the commotion of this holiday season had it launched in November.

Set in the near future, the game tackles everyone's least favorite axis of ewil, North Korea, and the consequences of a military coup that occurs on the eve of the reunification of North and South Korea. A ruthless general has seized control, and the international community must move quickly to avert a growing nuclear threat. Diplomatic efforts, predictably, fall apart





# THE TEAM



### THE AMERICAN

Chris Jacobs is an ex-Delta Force operative who speaks Korean, so he can communicate with the locals. For the player, he is notable for his strength and endurance, which means he essen tially has more hit points than the other guys



# THE SWEDE

Matthias Nilsson is an ex-Swedish Coastal Ranger who speaks Russian, making him particularly useful when dealing with the Mafia presence in the region. The team at Pandemic describes Nilsson as the "hardcore gamer's choice" because of his speed and agility



### THE BRIT

Jennifer Mui is a British-trained ex-MI6 agent who speaks Chinese. Her skills make her the ideal choice for ingratiating the player with the Chinese military presence in the region (they'd like North Korea for themselves), but she's also the stealthy choice. Mui can sneak up on guards more effectively than the two men can

quickly and a military solution is sought. A \$100 million bounty is put on the general's head, and other top targets are subsequently identified on a most-wanted list in the form of a deck of cards. Playing as one of three operatives for a private military corporation called Executive Operations your job is to head to the DMZ, work your way through the region, and take out the bad guys

When we started preproduction, the U.S. armed forces were hunting through the caves of Pakistan for Osama bin Laden," explains Matthew Paul, Mercenaries' producer at Pandemic Studios "There had been mas sive destruction in the war zone, and yet the coalition forces hadn't found the elusive figurehead. At the time, we thought, 'Hey, wouldn't it be interesting if the fantasy was that you were hunting down these high value targets that had escaped military forces from different countries?' That fantasy thrilled us all-get to play with the toys of the real military while hunting down a deck of 52 villains. Just from reading the news every day and watching TV, we saw our gameplay unfold before our very eyes."

Mercenaries is about much more than just a lone operative hunting down a sequence of evildoers, though. In a break from the predictable the game takes run and gun third person gameplay and mixes it with a 'digital sandbox" approach that rivals Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas for

# EVERY OBJECTIVE CAN BE APPROACHED IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

the degree of freedom it offers players. Every objective in the game can be approached in different ways, whether it's as simple as choosing between sneaking into a location or running in with guns blazing, or making more elaborate choices concerning how you dispose of targets Do you blow them up with explosives? Or do you launch an air strike

# **HYPE**



























against them? Do you go in on foot? Or do you jack a jeep, or a tank, or even a helicopter to do the job? The game offers more than 70 different vehicles (both civilian and military) that can be commandeered, as well as more weapons than you could possibly imagine, including pistols and machine guns, recoilless rifles, and SAM launchers and other fixed-emplacement fun.

"Our next big question was, 'So who's this hero you're playing?" Paul explains. "Upon further research, we came across PMCs—private military corporations. Working for a PMC, in essence being a part of a mercenary group, gave us the hero and the motivation we wanted. This hero could legitimately be able to use all the modern-day weaponry of the different armies, but he had to report only to the PMC. As a mercenary, the hero gets to do whatever he wants. And the mercenary does what he does for one thing—money. We created this dynamic in the game by introducing the four different factions, all of which have different contracts for the hero to pursue. The hero can work with the Allied forces,

the South Koreans, the Russian Mafia, or the Chinese, each with its own motivations, some of which are clear only after you play into the game for a while. The mercenary can provide support to one faction, only to turn around and accept a contract from another faction that crosses the first. The mercenary lifestyle became an integral part of the story and the game mechanics."

The game begins with your chosen hero (see sidebar) dropping into the region and heading to the Allied HQ in the DMZ. You are immediately given a taste of the game's mechanics as you drive your Humivee toward a North Korean roadblock. As the bad guys pepper your vehicle with lead, you're treated to the first of many huge explosions in the game. As you return fire, the assorted junk that fills the beautifully rendered environment is thrown around in a truly believable display of clever physics cal culations. Anything in the game world that isn't bolted down (and a lot of stuff that isn't can be destroyed, moved, toppied over, or blown up. Aim an RPG at a jeep next to a pile of boxes and chuckle as the ensuing freball















# POLITICAL WHO'S WHO KEEP FRIENDS CLOSE AND ENEMIES CLOSER

There are five main factions in Mercenaries. First, there are the Allied forces, which are pretty much a representation of the United Nations and are headed up by the Americans. They're looking to calm things down in the region and stop the North Koreans from selling nukes to terrorists or pointing them at America

The North Koreans are the bad guys of the story. They staged the coup, and the deck of 52 is comprised of different types of threats. You start the game by chasing after the clubs, who are white collar business bad guys; you then move on to the hearts, who are scientists and chemical weapons guys; the diamonds are the thugs of the game, while the spades are the elite soldiers and commanders of the North Korean military, with the ace of spades being the big bad general himself.

The South Koreans are the local good guys, but they have a bad relationship with the Chinese, who have a controlling interest in the area due to their funding of military activity and their desire to absorb all of Korea into the Chinese union.

Finally, the Russian Mafia is composed of the guys that everyone hates. All they're interested in is exploiting the situation for cold, hard cash, and because of that, they can be quite useful as a resource for the mercenaries-particularly if you're interested in getting your hands on a certain piece of hardware.

kicks the boxes up into the air before they crash back to the ground

A recent visit to LucasArts' impressive Big Rock Ranch facility in Marin County, CA, gave us the opportunity to sample some of the more spectac ular examples of giant explosions the game presents. As the hero trotted up to a huge gated complex, he used a satellite camera to target the compound's guard towers and called in a carpet bombing strike. As the jets screeched overhead, a wall of flame hit the ground before pushing for ward, destroying everything in its path. Watching the guard towers and surrounding buildings drop was like watching a video of a Vegas casino being demolished. Huge plumes of smoke kicked up as the buildings crumbled and dropped into the ground as though a giant hole was swallowing them up.

The plumes of smoke are actually a big part of what makes Mercenaries tick, too. Since the PS2 was first announced, much has been made of its ability to manipulate particles to create gorgeous effects; however, very few games have fully exploited this aspect of the system. Mercenar-

ies, we're told, does everything that Kutaragi and his pals in Japan had in mind when they first dreamed up the PS2's Graphics Synthesizer There's no better example of this than when your mercenary calls for backup in the middle of the DMZ while torrential weather peats down on him. The environment fogs up, the rain streaks down, and after he drops a flare, thick red smoke billows up into the sky for his comrades to home in on As the chopper flies in to drop whatever piece of glorious hardware is queued up, the wash from its rotors dissipates the red smoke and then kicks up the water that has settled on the ground. The effect is remarkably realistic, and it's just one of many spectacular moments in the game.

From what we've seen so far, Mercenaries stands to be one of the first surprise hits of 2005. When we played the game, the team at Pandemic was still balancing the gameplay, but assuming it succeeds in attaining the right mix of driving, shooting, and destruction, LucasArts could have a new franchise on its hands one that will hopefully last through the end of this hardware generation and into the next one. «

### MERCENARIES IN 20 SECONDS

- You're a merc chasing 52 North Korean bad
- military theme, and be



# FIVE QUESTIONS WITH TEAM FUSION

EA BECOMES A MAJOR PSP PLAYER

The biggest third-party videogame publisher in the world plans to support Sony's PSP handhold in a big way. We chatted with EA Team Fusion producer David McCarthy to get the lowdown on what the company has in store.

OPM So why is EA putting such a big push behind the PSP?

PATONIC A 11 W What we see in the platform is that it can re-create the type of quality that EA is known for. It also (does a better job) of hitting the type of demographic we're looking for than other handhelds. We're finally looking at a market that includes the 18- to 34 year-old group.

 $\circlearrowleft$   $\,$  Mhy choose Need for Speed Underground and Tiger Woods as launch games?

[1M] [We chose] Need for Speed Underground Rivals because Underground is a global success story. It's EA's best-selling console game, with 7.5 million units sold for the original Underground

With Tiger Woods, there's a natural match with the hardware. We talk about the sweet spot being in that 18 to 34 range, which is also the EA Sports demographic. We think a lot of early adopters are going to be those business types who like to play golf on the road. Also, Tiger Woods is a celebrity, and as an athlete, he has global appeal

OPM What's the team's approach to game design on a handheld like the PSP?

. M We don't want to make any sacrifices, so our objective from day one was to bring the quality, the amount of special effects, and the complexity of environments that you find in a console product. This hardware is

strong enough to deliver that on a handheld for the first time ever, so from a design perspective, we've tried to maintain all of the pillars of these franchises. For example, in *Underground*, you have a lot of shiny road surfaces, light trails, and light flares. In Tiger, you've got very detailed particle effects, like sand coming out of the bunker and water splashes. These games were never planned as ports, so from day one, we've always tried to offer a unique experience on the PSP.

Is it easier to work with PSP hardware than it is PS2 hardware?

Our developers say that the PSP environment is easier to work in than the earlier PlayStation environment. The architecture of the PSP is a

"WE'RE TRYING TO OFFER A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE ON THE PSP."

little more accessible than the PlayStation 2's. Again, we're taking some bigger steps with the PSP early on, but I think we're going to be able to tap into the hardware more than we initially thought

What would you say to someone who thinks this is the console game, only in portable form?

One of our objectives from a design point is for you to say exactly that. We want you to feel that this is the true console experience on PSP, but beyond that, we're going to add value with some unique content that you can't find anywhere else but on the PSP. «

# MATCHDOG



Similar to just about every other person who reads this magazine (or writes for it), I have to carry around a small towel to gather all the drool that accumulates whenever I hear the word "PSP" (yes, it's actually an acronym, not a word. Sue me). And if the pricing rumors I hear are true (that it will be sold for between \$179 and \$199), there is almost no doubt that it's going to have monster sales right out of the box—millions of the portable garning machines will be out on the streets within months.

And that's going to present an interesting oblem.

Consider this: Right now, the most populars handheld system is Nintendo's Game Boy Advance, which centers on kid-friendly gaming and some limited video playback through cartridges (for example, episodes of SpongeBob SquareFants). There are a handful of M-rated Game Boy Advance cartridges, but they are few,

### OHN SCALZI

is our man keeping an eye on things for the benefitof all gamers. You can see more of his thoughts at www.scalzi.com.

and the modest screen resolution of the system keeps things on the tamer side of graphic.

But now comes the PSP. It has a screen resotution of 480×272 (basically that of a small television), and the capability for 16 million coloramore than enough for realistic graphics. And unlike Nintendo, Sony does not have a history of shying away from M-rated games. The PSP's mini-CD-like UMD discs can carry 1.8GB of information, and the PSP is easily able to display video; it's a given movies will show up in UMD format, including, one suspects, R-rated features.

What about movies that are—shall we say harder than R on UMD? It's not likely since Sony from March of 2004: "Rise of DVD players in cars leads to cases of drive-by porn."

WANT MORE?

But it doesn't even have to be porn: Sit next to the wrong person while you watch an R-rated film or play an M-rated game on your PSS and suddenly there will be complaints that the PSP is attaking videogame violence (and Hollywood sex) into public places where they've never been before—and never should be. Yes, portable DVD players already exist, as well as laptops capable of playing DVDs and violent games—but not in the huge numbers that the relatively cheap PSP will rack up with a young, multimedia-engaged audiance.

# SOME IDIOT WILL WATCH PORN ON HIS PSP OUT THERE IN PUBLIC.

controls the UMD production process. But the PSP also includes a slot for a Memory Stick, which can be stuffed with audio and video of the owner's choosing for playback using the PSP's multimedia capabilities. Porn on the PSP will happen, probably within about 15 minutes of some people getting their PSPs home. And then some idiot will watch the stuff on his PSP out there in public. Think it won't happen? I refer you to the following article at SiliconAlley.com

In short: The PSP is going to create the next great videogame controversy. This is not a prediction: It's a statement of fact ahead of the event. What can you do? Besides being aware that this national conversation is on the way, not much, except this: When you use your PSP in public, remember that you are in public. There will inevitably be some fool who will be arrested for watching porn on his PSP in a public place. Try really hard to make sure it's not you. ©

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PLAY IN GURS









# CETTO ET E CR.

It was 1996 when a little development house out of the U.K. finished work on a lush new adventure game featuring a brunette archeologist named Lara Croft. It was a defining moment for me as I watched her strut seductively across my screen and into the sex symbol status that would turn the gaming world on its head. Fast-forward eight years through the evolution of next gen hardware, motimillion dollar budgets, and massive accept ance of games in pop culture. Still, Lara Croft continues to personify an ongoing culture clash over gender, sexuality, empowerment, and objectification. It was while standing in my first-ever ladies' room line at E3 2004 as I pondered the Playboy bunnies, the return of Leisure Suit Larry, and the slew of buxom virtual ladies headlining each booth that I questioned whether the industry had evolved at al.

It might seem like a simple puzzle to solve: trying to understand why temale representation in videogames—whether it's as characters, develop ers, or gamers—is important. But it seemed the more questions I asked the more elusive the answers became And it wasn't long before my own stereotypes were called into question

When I requested an interview to discuss Cyberlore's *Playboy: The Mansson*, I never even considered that the senior designer on the *Sims*-style project might be a woman—one pregnant with twins, in fact As I expected, Brenda Brathwaite has a lot to say about females in today's games. But I can guarantee it's not what you might explicit.

"If you're going to animate breasts, animate them properly, admon ishes Brathwaite. "The breasts in the original *Dark Alliance* drove me nuts If my breasts moved like that, I'd go to the doctor...or call an exorcist."

While this industry veteran shows a sense of humor and perspective concerning her work, there are many who won't find the idea of creating a *Playboy* magazine simulator funny, "I suspect that those who feel it's a gender controversy have probably not seen an issue of *Playboy* magazine. They have it stereotyped," suggests farthwate. "I find that *Playboy* is a

celebration of women and goes out of its way to be respectful. On Playboy: The Mansion, we were committed to making a good, tasteful game."

I got a similar response regarding Majesco's *BloodRayne*; Rayne, coinci dentally, just appeared in *Playboy's* "Sexiest Game Characters" spread. And here too, the product manager for the goth gueen was herself female.

"If you don't have the gameplay to back up the character appeal, T&A will only get you so far," effuses Lv Buckley, "BloodRayne resonates very well with our target audience of males ages 17 to 34, but Rayne has a huge female following as well. I think that's attributable to her strength and attitud—"It's definitely empowering to play as her"

# "WE WERE COMMITTED TO MAKING PLAYBOY A TASTEFUL GAME."

So if it's all about personality, why bother with the heaving bosom and leather chaps? It turns our Rayne was an ugly duckling before her transformation to voluptuous vixen. "Initially, Rayne had a militant, dark gothic look. She was a brunette with tight buns in her hair and a very severe body line," explains Buckley. And I even found myself admitting I'd rather play the "extreme makeover" version of the vamp.

Maybe it's not a crime to sex up the leading ladies, particularly if they retain some character development. But what about Vivendi's upcoming Red Ninja, which claims to incorporate sexuality as a gameplay mechanic, allowing main character Kurenai to seduce unsuspecting quards?

"It's a challenging concept to attempt when body language and atmos phere are confined by things like polygon limits, admits Associate Producer Melissa Miller. "Early on, we conducted a focus test specifically with











female gamers. They liked the concept of Kurenai but felt she was show ing too much skin with the short kimono. Once we justified the need for some sexiness with the seduction mechanic, they bought into Kurenai completely and were really excited about playing her.'

Producer Yozo Sakagamı of Namco's Death by Degrees, featuring Tekkeri's Nina, expressed a similar design challenge when trying to achieve what his team calls "functional beauty in combat" It turns out that Nina's bikini and catsuit are more than just eye candy. "The outfit designs were based on ease of movement and variation in appearance," states Sakagami. "Depending on whether an attack connects with bare or clothed skin, the resulting damage differs."

# "[SEXY] CHARACTER DESIGNS ARE AN EASY WAY OUT."

Right And are female gamers buying into it? "We've received favorable reactions from women toward Nina in this game. We were surprised because these women saw in Nina the character image we had hoped to create but feared we hadn't attained. Intangible elements such as these can easily be obscured while developing a game."

With such a positive response to stereotypical female protagonists, I began to question whether it was possible to design a strong female char acter without the requisite augmented body and sexual references

"These types of character designs are not necessary; it is an easy way out," argues Ubisoft's Tyrone Miller. "Beyond Good & Evi shows us that you can convey the same strength and likability in a female character with out having to use blatant sex appeal."

Interestingly enough, BG&E's protagonist Jade is the brainchild of game designer Michel Ancel (Rayman, King Kong). "Rumor has it that Ancel's wife actually served as the main inspiration and muse for Jade's took and personality," informs Miller. "Ancel wanted to create a realistic lead character with a persona that players could connect to and identify with. As you play the game, you really develop an attachment to her."

So with men designing approachable leading ladies of realistic proportions and women enthusing over the feminine aspects of *Playboy* and goth queens, I realized that the issue might have less to do with gender and more to do with how sexuality is perceived in today's games.

"it's wrong to single out female characters when their male counterparts are usually just as superficial," argues Amy Hennig, game director for Naughty Dog. "We seem to be at that 'naughty' stage, where some developers are testing the limits to see what they can get away with Games aren't considered just toys anymore, but we haven't matured beyond juvenile titillation."

Karn Yamaguwa, 2D-texture lead for Sucker Punch (Sly Cooper) points out. "Sexuality can be powerful, but it depends on how it's used. Games like Rumble Roses...some of my female friends find them a bit offensive, while others find them hilanous. Is it for boys to ogle? Of course! But I also know plenty of men who are embarrassed by it."

Anna Kipnis, a programmer for Double Fine Studios, adds, "Games can have story elements and amazing gameplay that can appeal to people regardless of gender. I believe that is what game developers should strive for, and perhaps not enough do."

Aletheia Simonson of Sony CEA's product evaluation group agrees "Games for women are there; the hurdle is getting a woman who has never played a videogame to try one it will probably be some time before the game equivalent of the romantic comedy is a blockbuster hit," she explains

Well, one developer seems to have combined gender equality with







mass appeal. EA Maxis' The Sims franchise has laid claim to a whopping 50 percent female audience. And it's not as if this series is without its gen der stereotypes and sex appeal. One look at The Urbz: Sims in the City reveals a prevalence of thong panties and revealing clothing. So just whom is this game meant for?

"Were we planning to entice the male? Well, it does make them look twice in the office!" jokes Virginia McArthur, lead producer on The Urbz Handheld. "But you will find when women play, they tend to choose the hip low-riders, as it really fits in with the culture of the location

As for the secret of The Sims' success, McArthur answers confidently: "When we brought The Urbz to consoles we realized that what keeps females interested in our products is the customization and real-life inter actions and scenarios they can play out as an Urb. Female players on consoles wanted to spend more time socializing and unlocking items and outfits, they wanted to spend less time on motives and watching an mations."

But isn't it general zations like those above that have been packaged into the dreaded concept of the girl game "?" It's silly and patronizing to think there's some magic 'girl game' formula, that if the box is pink and there's shopping in the game, girls will buy it in droves," warns Naughty Dog's Hennig, who believes this stereotyping disenfranchises girls all the more, "In general, I think women prefer games that include exploration, problem-solving, customization, and nonlinear play. When we incorporate these elements into our games-whether it's GTA or The Sims-we're going to attract a wider demographic."

However, despite the recent growth spurt of women making and playing games, there remains a great divide between male and female gamers. Many women report feeling intimidated, whether it's because of an overwhelming amount of product on store shelves or the often aggressive behavior of other gamers. It's no secret that it can be tough to become part of the hardcore online community, even for the most talented players.

In an attempt to bridge the gender gap, Ubisoft has created and funded a fully female gaming team known as the Frag Dolls, a group of hardcore twitch gamers with panache who play Splinter Cell and Rainbow Six At first impression, this could be taken as a marketing gimmick by Ubisoft to attract more males to their products. Not true, claims the publisher

"We're creating role models for a whole legion of girls out there who may have been too intimidated to play games online-or even play at all," explains Ubisoft's online community manager, Nate Mordo. "For those who have bemoaned the fact that in game heroines have tended to adhere to a certain template, I think that more women playing games means that we'll see more games that cater to this newly diverse audience

# "IT'S SILLY TO THINK THERE IS A MAGIC 'GIRL GAME' FORMULA."

The Frag Dolls are looking to debunk the myths associated with gir gamers and help support other women looking to play. But it's still naive to think that all gamers are treated equally: One visit to the qirl team's ) demonstrates the uphill battle to convince male gamers that girls are worthy adversaries and teammates

So it appears, in fact, that publishers are finally accepting the existence of the once mythical female market. However, whether the industry can mature and evolve to capture their interests still remains to be seen. What I can quarantee is a sentiment echoed by every woman I snoke with. The more women that get involved, the more power they have to evoke change from within. It may take time and effort, but I don't know anyone who ever said getting the girl was easy



# RIGHT ON THE MONEY

SONY REVEALS PRICING FOR THE PSP IN JAPAN

If you were shocked when Sony announced the price for the PSP in Japan, you weren't the only one. The 19,800 yen (approximately \$186) price for the basic PSP package (which includes a battery pack and an AC adapter iis far lower than anyone was originally expecting for a high-end portable system that does more than play games. If anything, it shows how serious Sony is about getting a foothold in the portable mar ket. "There are two things going on," says Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Mor gan. "Sony's decided to be price competitive, that's pretty obvious. And two, they're going to have more accessories and fewer built-in abilities than people were expecting."

Even with the relatively low price, Pachter argues that there are still two different markets one for Nintendo's younger audience and another for the key audience of 18- to 30-year-olds. "Nintendo has segmented the market as under 20, while Sony has segmented the market as 18 and over, so there's not a lot of overlap," Pachter says. "Sony's pricing is meant to be competitive with Nintendo's, but not to compete head-to head. It's Sony's intention to grow the install base as rapidly as possible and then sell those people all types of software, whether it's moves, music, or videogame software."

It's the razors and razor blades model, and Sony knows it's important to get a high install base so it can lure multimedia companies in and gain their support for the PSP platform, since Sony will be making money off of the soft ware and not the hardware. "They learned this lesson with the Betamax," says Pachter. "You're not going to sell the movie studios on paying a royalty for getting the privilege of putting a movie on this UMD format unless you can show it's in their best interest to do so A promise that



# "SONY'S PRICING IS MEANT TO BE

you might sell 20 or 30 million PSPs someday is worthless. Show them an install base of 15 mil lion PSP owners and say to the studios that if they put their movies out on the UMD format, then (the studios will find out) they can sell more discs at \$20."

Sony has yet to announce pricing for the North American market, but if the company's track record is any indication, the PSP will be similarly priced here in the United States.



MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

Priced at 24,800 yen fabout \$230), the PSP Value Pack (left) will add a 32MB Memory Stick Duo, headphones with a remote control, and a soft case and hand strap to the standard package of PSP, AC adaptor, and battary pack.

Last month, after a lackfuster showing at the Tokyo Game Show (TGS), I expressed doubts about the PlayStation Portable.

Oh, what a difference a month makes. 19,800 Japanese yen. \$185. This simple low price instantly swept aside months of speculation. Supporters and doubters alike were stunned by a price a mere \$35 to \$45 more than that of the comparatively underpowered Nintendo DS. Yet the PSP wasn't always quaranteed to be so affordable; though no one outside Sony knows the whole story, there appears to have been some last-minute finagling.

In late September, Sony was scheduled to hold a conference where it was assumed the company would announce the PSP's price. One hour before the meeting, however, Nintendo held a surprise press conference to reveal the price of the Nintendo DS—15,000 yen, or \$150—which was lower than expected. Sony, presumably caught off guard, delayed the meeting, but Sony Computer Entertainment Germany had

### ANDREW VESTAL

teaches English in the land of our friends to the East, and he knows a good bergain when he sees one.

already sent out a press release declaring a 33,000 yan price point for the PSP. Once the meeting began, SCE head Kan Kutaragi dismissed that price but refused to give another, saying only that Sony would wait until TGS. But when the show came and went without any news, many wondered: Was Sony seriously going to launch the PSP by the end of the year?

Yes. On October 27, Sony announced a 19,800 yen price and a street date of December 12 for the PSP. Kutaragi commented that before the announcement, the price was secret even to many high-ranking Sony employees. Before the announcement, Japanese industry buzz was suggesting a price of 30,000 yen or more. 19,800

tion is the fastest path to reality. Sony's willingness to take an initial financial hit builds confidence no amount of advertising could provide. Gamers know that Sony's committed. Perhaps more important, developers now know that their PSP games will reach a willing PSP-owning sudience, instead of one sitting on the sidelines waiting for a price drop. Eventually, the manufacturing cost will drop and the hardware will become profitable. (Kutaragi claims this will happen by March 2006.) But the effects of this burst of consumer and developer confidence will last the system's lifetime.

Was the PSP's low price a reaction to the Nintendo DS'? Undoubtedly. Yet by taking a calcu-

# HIT SONY IF YOU WANT, BUT IT'S GOING TO HIT BACK, HARD.

yen wasn't just a pleasant surprise: It was mindboggling. Sony was making a statement.

Sony wants you to know that it's deadly serious about the PSP, and the company's aiming for Nintendo's igualar from the start. 19,800 yenis undoubtedly below the initial cost of manufacturing a PSP. Maybe slightly less, maybe by a whole lot, but Sony is definitely losing money with every PSP sold.

By setting such a low initial price, the PSP, like the PS2 before it, has been given an aura of inevitability, and in the game industry, perceplated financial risk up front, Sony may yet have the last laugh. Recently, Sony dropped an additional bombshell: Resident Evil 4, exclusive to the Nintendo GameCube for years, would be coming to PlayStation 2 as well. Those with long memories will remember that Sony first entered the videogame market after Nintendo backstabbed the company over a Super Nintendo CD add-on. The pricing machinations of the past month drive home the lesson we already know. Hit Sony if you want, but it's gone hit back. Hard. 6C





# WE WILL SPARE MILL SPA



Blood Violence Strong Language



PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WERLE



# ANIMANIA

NEW HITS FROM THE FALL ANIME SEASON

# CHAMPLOONIVERSE

A weak anime season earlier the year in Japan gave us essentially one show we'rth watching—Shinichiro Watanabe's San — Cheripioo.
Luckily, it's a definite keeper, the virtual heir to Cowboy Bebop when it comes to a completely stylish package.

Like the stir-fry dish that it's named after, Champloo throws together a little bit of everything. Three unlikely partners—an Okinawan b-boy swordsman, a nearly silent disgraced samurai, and an ex-waltress who's in search of some obscure sort of reverge—wander west through Japan, bouncing back and forth between dead serious drama, randomly absurd comedy, and the best samurai action to hit the small screen in ages. Set in the late 17th century, the series takes full advantage of its spot on the timeline to mix in Dutch diplomats and other influences from Japan's gradual exposure to the outside world.

Bebop's jazzy music captured the show's overarching style perfectly. In Champloo's case, a mellow trip-hop soundtrack produced by a crew of four Japanese DJs holds the series together—the music never overpowers the visu als, but it underlines them perfectly. To get an idea of what it's all about, pick up the first DVD from Geneon, which is available on January 11.

### WHAT'S NEXT

In the meantime, a new season begins, and it looks a hell of a lot more promising than the also-rans that accompanied Châmploo on the tube this summer. Here's a rundown of what's looking good this fall and what could become the next big thing on American DVD next year.

### GANKUTSU-QU

In Japanese, that means "King of Caverns," but it is also the Japanese title for Dumas' The Court if of Monte Cristo, of which thus is a beautiful science-fiction retelling. Studio Gonzo unleashes computer graphics overfill in the service of amazing art direction, and it's backed by a killer soundtrack from Jean-Jacques Burnel (bassist for British New Wavers the Stranglers).

### GUNDAM SEED DESTINY

The original Seed was a big enough hit to inspire another 52 episodes of sequels. In the style of Zeta Gundam (on sale now, buy it!), Destiny introduces a new cast of characters and a new chapter in the feud between natur

# BECK (MONGOLIAN CHOP SQUAD)

Based on Harold Sakuishi's long-running Shonen magazine strip, it's the story of a struggling indie rock band on the usual tortu ous road to the top. Mad House turns in a superb production job, and the music comes from a corps of actual Japanese indie rockers—so far, the show's sound is catchy as all hell

### RING NI KAKERD

It's boxing action based on a '70s-vintage comic from the creator of Saint Seiya (aka Knights of the Zodiac). As a rule, you can't go wrong with a classic '70s boxing series

### FUUJIN MONOGATARI

Also called Windy Tales, it's the latest quirky effort from Production I.G.; this time the story is about young high school girls floating off to adventures in the "festival of the wind."

### YAKITATE!! JAPAN

An enterprising young baker uses his "hands of the sun" in his quest to create the greatest bread in all of Japan. Yes, it's an all-out shonen bread baking story. And it's pretty damn funny, too.

On the OVA front, Gainax has launched Gunbuster 2, hoping to prove that zero-G teenage jiggle can still draw the punters 15 years later Sadly, we're afraid the market may prove them right.

### YOU ARE NOT ALONE

s your girlfriend or wife or significant other tired of hearing you beloble shout your favorite unime? Then make som new friends and talk to comeone who cares cin animealliance—



# THE ST

# **NOKIA 7280**

It looks like something from the future, but Nota's tiny new GSM phone should be available by the end of the year. The 7280 eschews a keypad in favor of a "navispinner" input device, which can be a bit tedious. But the slide-open design and ultracompect form-factor are going to make this the hot phone for the holidays. A 640x480 camea, MP3 ringtones, and an integrated FM radio round out this stylish little package. Let's hope the price is as compact.







# A CHARITY FOR GAMERS CHILD'S PLAY

Washington, D.C.

Looking to spread a little ove around this holiday season? Why not share with some kids who aren't as fortunate as you? Our friends over at Penny Arcade are bringing back their anazing Child's Play chartly drive, which has now expanded to provide quality toys and videogames to children's hospitals all over the United States Visit and share your passion for games with kids in Seatle, Okladad, San Diego, Houston, and



## LOTR: ROTK PSSEECGS

That's the Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Platnum Series Special Extended Edition Collector's Giff Set to you and me. This 80dollar set includes the extended version of the film (with more than 50 minutes of extra footage) plus a truly incredible sculpture of Minas Tirith, complete with a space beneath for storing your valuables. Also included in the gift set is a DVD feature on the scoring of the films. You could buy the regular Extended Edition without the extras-but why?



# OLD MAN'S HAR

OPM columnist John Scalzi's thought-provoking sci-fi debut is the story of a recruit in the Colonial Defence Forces (a military organization made up exclusively of retirees) sent to combat aliens encroaching on Earth's colonies. Critically acclaimed sci fi author and Nebula Award finalist Cory Doctorow calls Old Man's War "gripping and surpassingly original. It's Starship Troopers without the lectures. It's The Forever War with better sex. It's funny, it's sad, and it's true."



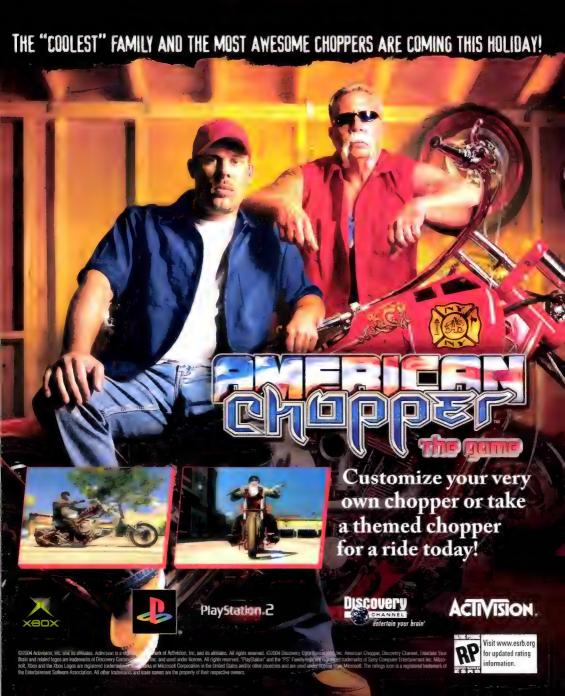
# ULTIMATE MATRIX COLLECTION

For anyone who wasn't completely disillusioned by the latter two films in this trilogy, we offer this massive 10 DVD collection. It features all three movies (with "revisited" feature discs for each), The Anmatrix, and more other stuff than we have room to list here. Moreover, this version of The Matrix features remastered picture and sound, and each film includes two new audio commentaries. To top it off, the Limited Edition comes with a bust of Nee and an 80-page collector's book.



### SLEEVES

Want to look like you're punk rawk without jeopardizing your chances at that cushy white-collar job? Visit — sees, \_\_iniga\_em for the ultimate in instant cool: a line of shirts designed to look as though you've been ferociously tattooed. Featuring styles for men and women ranging from the traditional color to stark tribal styles, these shirts will run you from 80 to around 100 bucks—a small price to pay for looking cool without actually having to go under the needle.



# BY THE NUMBERS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH -BGAMES

With more than 2 million preorders, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas enjoyed record breaking sales. Apparently, you don't just love the '90s you luuuauuuuuuuuuuuuuuu the '90s



Make your mark in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

	litle (Publisher)		
1	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)	1 4	90000
2	NBA Live 2005 (EA Sports)	-	****
3	Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (Activision)	1	10000
4	ESPN NBA 2K5 (ESPN VG)		••••
5	Mortal Kombat: Deception (Midway)		****
6	X-Men Legends (Activision)		****
7.	Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude (Vivendi Universal)	1.	991
8	FIFA 2005 (EA Sports)	-	
9	Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War (Namco)	1	****
10	Star Wars Battlefront (LucasArts)	. 4	10000
11	Madden NFL 2005 (EA Sports)	١,	*****
12	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 (EA Sports)		****
13	Def Jam Fight for NY (EA Games)		90001
14	Katamari Damacy (Namco)		
15	ESPN NFL 2K5 (ESPN VG)		****
16	Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne (Atlus)	-	
17	Midway Arcade Treasures 2 (Midway)		****
18	Conflict: Vietnam (Global Star)	-	981
19	Star Ocean: Till the End of Time (Square Enix)	4	****
20	Sly 2: Band of Thieves (Sony CEA)		****









Source EB Games, September 2004. Numbers reflect the sales at EB and its affiliated outlets and don't include other retail outlets. That's probably why you'll never see *Deer Hunter* crack the top 10. Japan's top 10 and the top 10 rentails come from other sources. Game descriptions written by the OPM staff. The Race Is On sources, BBC com, Guinness World Records

1	Dragon Ball GT	Bandai
2	Final Fantasy VII	Square Enix
3	Final Fantasy Anthology	Square Enix
4	Final Fantasy Chronicles	Square Enix
5	Ridge Racer	Namco
6	Final Fantasy VIII	Square Enix
7	Final Fantasy Origins	Square Enix
8	NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA
9	Final Fantasy IX	Square Enix
10	FIEA Soccer 2005	EA Games



1	Naruto: Narutimate Hero 2	Bandai
2	Mobile Suit Gundam Seed	Bandai
3	Ace Combat 5: The Unsung Wa	r Namco
4	Tales of Symphonia	Namco
5	Full Metal Alchemist 2	Square Enix
6	Berserk	Sammy
7	Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games
8	Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Lege	nds Koei
9	Pachisuro Hokuto no Ken	Sammy
10	Space Battleship Yamato	Bandai



1	GTA: San Andreas (PS2)	Rockstar	
2	Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (PS	2) Activision	
3	Star Wars Battlefront (PS2)	LucasArts	
4	Ace Combat 5 (PS2)	Namco	
5	Men of Valor (XB) Viver	ndi Universal	
6	Conflict. Vietnam (PS2)	Global Star	
7	Star Wars Battlefront (XB)	LucasArts	
8	Mortal Kombat: Deception (PS2	2) Midway	
9	Def Jam Fight for NY (XB)	EA Games	
n	Moddon NEL 2005 (DC2)	EA Sports	

The second secon	2.1
1   GTA: San Andreas (PS2)	Rockstar
2 NBA Live 2005 (PS2)	<b>EA Sports</b>
3   Tony Hawk's Underground 2 (PS2)	Activision

ESPN NBA 2K5 (PS2) ESPN VG 5 SWG Jump to Lightspeed (PC) LucasArts

Midway

Paper Mario 2 (GC) Nintendo Mortal Kombat: Deception (PS2) Midway 8 ESPN NBA 2K5 (XB) ESPN VG

9 Mortal Kombat: Deception (XB) 10 X-Men: Legends (PS2) Activision

### We've seen a lot of our old buddles the

Soviets in games as of late. Just remember: Here in United States you might play game, but in Russia, game plays you.













# March 2005

devilmayery.com





PlayStation.2



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# PRINCE OF PERSIA VARRIOR WITHIN







princeo persiagame.com

FEATURING MUSIC BY GODSMACK













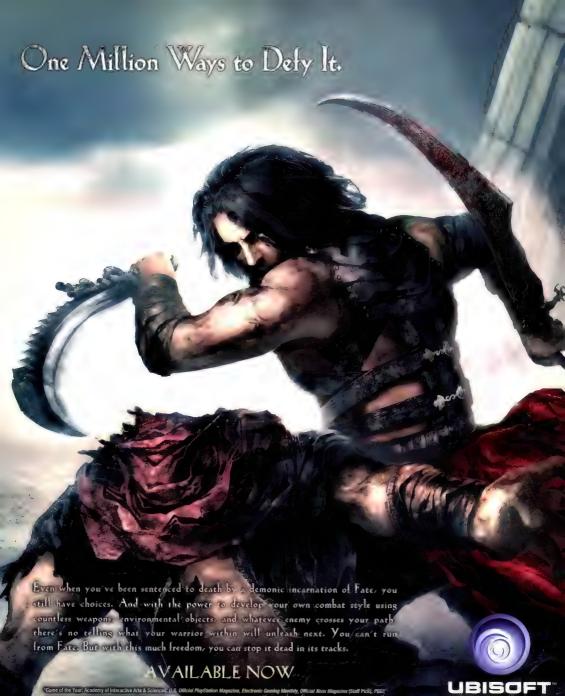


Our Most Wanted Came of 2004 1812

"9.6" Office Xbox Magazine

Tre out of the TSMI

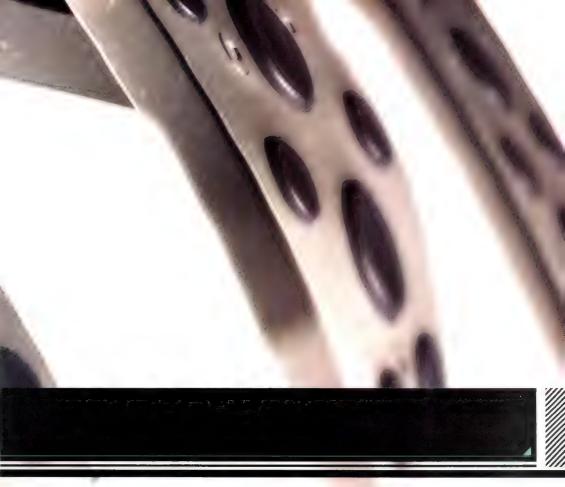






# GRANTURISMO 4

KAZUNORI
YAMUOHI
Titels the man who makas
all your serdid little racingqums farinaise come true.
Hit company, Polyhony
Digital, first unleashed *Gran*Türismo note an unauspectIng PlayStation audience
back in 1998. The series has
sining gone on to sell more
thind 38 million copies.

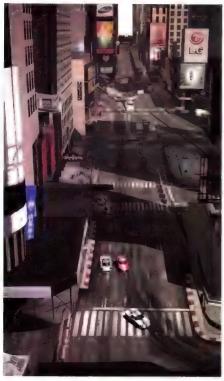


After we heard numerous rumors that GT4 would be delayed yet again, a visit to Sony Computer Entertainment's offices in Foster City, CA, in late October revealed a version of the game that was far from complete It was clearly getting close, but the various game modes were scattered across an assortment of discs, and the entire game didn't exist on a single disc that you could put into a PS2 and play. Rumors were quashed November 9, however, when the game was finally declared "finished" by the team at Polyphony Digita-

Since late summer, we have been trotting across the globe to keep tabs on producer Kazunori Yamauchi's masterpiece, with the hope of bringing you a review of the game this month, but in the final stages of production, GT4 was being rebuilt on a daily basis. "We saw dramatic changes daily," an SCEA spokesperson tells us, "With GT3, those revi sions went all the way up to the wire, and the final code was flown from Japan and hand-delivered to the plant for it to be manufactured. There's a good chance that's going to happen again '

After the Tokyo Game Show in late September, a visit to Polyphony Digital's impressive new headquarters just south of Japan's capital allowed us to see how the 75-member team works under its influential leader. "Yamauchi is the core of everything," says the game's U.S. based producer, Taku Imasaki. "Everything about the game is driven by him, and his personality is key to getting the game done. He's a remarkably powerful man within the Sony collective and somewhat unique because of his ability to say 'no' to executives." Like U.S. based studio Naughty Dog, Polyphony is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Computer Enter tainment and enjoys a crown jewel like presence within the organization Yamauchi is the president of Polyphony but is also a senior vice presi dent of SCEI, and as such, is deeply involved in numerous projects out side of Gran Turismo "He has a lot of say in everything," Imasaki reveals. "I guess that's what comes from being the guy behind a fran chise that's now sold more than 36 million copies. He's very influential on both the hardware and software sides of the business, and just recently, he's become much more involved with other first party teams to encourage the sharing of technology. You'll actually start to see some of the fruits of this next year."

is it all of these distractions that led to the delays and changes we've seen these past few months? The sudden removal of the online mode was met with doubt and derision from hardcore gamers used to hopping online with every other racing-game release this year. 'I actually have a working disc of the online version on my desk right now," says Imasaki









### GRAN TURISMO U.S. SALES DATA

We all know it sold a lot of copies wordwide, right? But how many has it sold hare in the United States? Fortunately, we have that information right here ready for you to bore pasople at parties with form Turken 2-3.8 million Gran Turken 2-3.8 million Gran Turken 3-8 million Gran Turken 3-8 million Gran Turken 3-8 million















when we meet up with him again in mid-November, just as the game is starting to go through its test sessions in preparation for its scheduled December 14 release. "The problem is that when you have such a beau tiful game, you really want to be able to keep everything within your control. Yamauchi is a perfectionist, and he wants to make sure that the game retains its beauty and doesn't go out with any weird bugs that would make the experience seem less real. I think it was a wise decision for him to pull the online mode when he did because it has really heliped keep the project on schedule. A lot of online games are released and make you live with a lot of problems. The GT team members are very critical of their own work, they're arists, and they're very concerned about maintaining the GTan Turismo magic in every mode."

So if Imasaki has the online mode on his desk right now, how is it? And is the subsequent release that Yamauchi alluded to at the Tokyo Game Show a certainty? "When we play internally, it works fine," Imasaki admits. "We don't want to sacrifice anything, though, and there are concessions you have to make when you consider the ramifications of network code. Getting the game out is our main concern, and I really don't know how much longer we'd need to make [the online model right Maybe two more months? Maybe two more months? Maybe two more months? Maybe two more months? Maybe two right leastly don't know. What you

need to remember is that online wasn't ever the core of the game. There are still LAN modes, though, You can play a six-player game in the new version of what used to be the iLink battle mode in GT3, only now it looks better and it's more stable "

Over the past year, it has become increasingly clear that the game is

# YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THAT ONLINE WASN'T EVER THE CORE."

incredibly ambitious. It boasts a 650-car roster, a completely overhauled physics engine, a new artificial intelligence system, Dolby Pro Logic II support, and completely remodeled tracks. There's also the matter of the new photo mode, the oft-misunderstood B-Spec mode, and the whole notion of "the human element," which is essentially the fact that the Gran Turismo world is now full of people, including drivers in the cars Surely meeting the expectations of fans with a franchise this big is a complete nightmare? "The even-numbered games are always the hard











### WHAT DO ALL THOSE **BUTTONS DO?**

### Z | 0 | 0

COULD YOU TAKE MY PICTURE? 'CUZ I WON'T REMEMBER

When Yamauchi announced the new photo mode in GT4 at E3 back in May, a lot of hardcore gamers questioned the wisdom of diverting energy into something so frivolous while we were all still waiting for the game to be finished. "We wanted to create something that would appeal to the player and be highly realistic," Yamauchi tells us, "It was easy to include the functions that make up the photography mode, but it was difficult to get it to be high enough quality that you couldn't tell that it was from a game. If someone picked up a photo and automatically thought it was from a game, they would say, 'So what?' It had to be something special."

The mode is divided into two different formats. First is the photo drive, which allows you to take shots during a race and play around with the zoom, depth of field, and motion-blur effects that the software offers. The second is the photo travel mode, which lets you drop one of the cars from your garage into any of the locations listed here. You can save up to 50 photos to your memory card and even print them to a USB printer. (As we go to press, only Epson has a printer with PS2 drivers, but SCEA informs us that a number of other companies have committed to supporting the game.) The simulated camera in the game is the equivalent of a 1.2megapixel device, which allows for focus and exposure control, as well as a number of different filters. When printed, the images are shockingly realistic, especially in the more urban locations like New York or Tokyo.

FIFTEEN LOCATIONS FOR PHOTO TRAVEL Gion District - Kyoto, Japan Nanzenji Temple - Kyoto, Japan Sagano - Kyoto, Japan Tsumago - Nagano, Japan Piazza San Marco - Venice, Italy: Shibuya - Tokyo, Japan Tokyo International Forum - Tokyo, Japan. Shiga Kogen - Nagano, Japan Brooklyn, New York Times Square - New York City -Asian fish market Fremont Street - Las Vegas Louisburg Square - Boston Grand Canyon - Arizona Kobe - Japan



# WHAT'S B-SPEC ALL ABOUT? SIT BACK AND JUST WATCH, MOSTLY

Think of it as being like a version of the replay mode that you get to tire ker with. Although it's been described as "Gran Turismo Tactics" by some observers, it's by no means as complicated as you might think "That was a worry of mine when I was making B-Spec," Yamauchi explains. "The original idea was to make a simulation mode where you manage the race from the pit. We originally had a lot of commands and instructions, but we gradually got rid of some and developed just a core instruction set that would keep things simple. I've always been about racing-obviously, that's what I do. I've been racing for many years, but sometimes, I just like to sit and drink coffee while I watch what's going on, without actually having to really do all that racing."



### TWO WAYS TO PLAY

from two different views tracking screen (below) ker with, and watch, the



















ones," Imasakı concedes. "[GT] and [GT3] were so much easier because they were each the first iteration of a technology on their respective systems and they became tech demos for the hardware. The evennumbered games have to be an expansion of that You can't rely on the technology so much, and you're really obliged to provide much more volume. GT4 has to be bigger and better-looking than GT3, it has to have more features, and it has to be something that consumers can sit down and play for six months. If you look back at GT2, people played it for a year and maybe didn't open everything up. GT4 will be the PS2 GT2."

Time spent with near-final code revealed an experience far more complex than what previous iterations provided. The world of Gran Turismo is now navigated through a map that has gameplay types grouped into "villages" based on a certain theme. You have the license-test villages (yes, they're back, and yes, you do have to complete all of them if you want to experience all the different modes), the career mode village, the car village, and many more Entering each of these communities provides a host of options. Visiting a car village provides access to both new and classic cars from the manufacturer, as well as an expanded array of tuning options. "The mods we offer are basically the same as those in GT2," Imasaki informs us. "The difference is that there's much, much

more depth now, and the number of subcategories is far greater. If you look at, say, the different options for brakes, you'll find that there are many more manufacturers represented. We also have aerodynamic parts, like body kits and spoilers, this time, all of which are official, just like the cars. We still don't offer decals or vinyls, though, mainly because

### "THE EVEN-NUMBERED GAMES ARE ALWAYS THE HARD ONES."

we have a hard enough time with all the approvals necessary for the licenses we have right now. Slapping stickers on things would make it even more complicated.

Since the original game was released in May 1998, the series has quickly established itself as a force in automotive media because of its realism and attention to detail. Early on, it was a challenge for the team to get all of the manufacturers on board, though, "Oh my god, yes," Imasaki laughs. "Early on, we had to practically beg them to work with





### GRAN TURISMO FOR BOYS

At the completion purty for Gran Turismo 4 in Tokyo November 9. pet side project aimed at 8-year-olds, dubbed Gran Turismo for Boys. "I'd ike yaung kida te anaor stand more fully the fan of cars," he said. "Using the entertainment powe of games, we'll be increasing the number of car lovers 20 years or so don't grow to love cars in youth," he continued, we become adults who are uninterested in cars." This is not a joi ve ashum vau











us, but it's completely different now. They really want to work with us and they just load us up with information and requests. It's a hard bal ancing act, trying to manage what our needs for the game are versus the car manufacturers using it as something that they can use to try and make a car cool. In fact, it's arguable that one of the reasons GT4 has been delayed so long is because of all the side projects we've been doing for promotions and auto shows. We've had special single-make versions of the game for maybe 30 or 40 different projects-like BMW for the 1 Series, or the promotion we did with Toyota for the Prius, where you got a spec al demo if you requested a car brochure. We put a lot of time and resources into working with all of the manufacturers, and it's really paid off. Not only do we work with them on all these special ver sions, but some car manufacturers even use the GT engine to help design their cars. They can build the car with our engine and see how it will look in a variety of different environments. It's not just the look, though; the physics engine is so good that they can get a feel for the way it will handle as well. It's that good now, Y'know, I think Yamauchi's ultimate goal is to one day make a car himself

"A core part of the development of *Gran Turismo* is giving priority to the relationships with the car companies," Imasaki tells us "It's more

than just a game now. Yamauchi really gives me a hard time if I'm not talking to car manufacturers enough. That's where we're different from some of the other racing games out there. We're very focused on the relationships and on the reality of the experience," he says "You know, picking 650 cars for the final game was a really long process," he laughs "Building the cars themselves took even longer. It takes about three

### "CAR MANUFACTURERS USE THE GT ENGINE TO HELP DESIGN THEIR CARS."

weeks to a month to produce each car in the game, and we had a team of about 30 to 40 artists doing just that. Every car gets the full treatment, whether it's the concepts, the classic cars that we had to track down through clubs, or the cars we work directly with the manufacturers on We traveled all over the place to work on the cars. We saw collections in Vegas, Detroit, even Jay Leno's co lection in Los Angeles."

So how is a car built for the game? "Sometimes the manufacturers

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PlayStation.2



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## THAT'S A LOT OF TRACKS

EVER WANTED TO RACE A FORD TAURUS AROUND THE NURBURGRING? NO? WELL, NOW YOU CAN ANYWAY

Very early on in the process for Gran Turiamo 4," Imasaki explains, "the programmers found a much better way to process graphics on the PS2. As a result, we completely redesigned all of the tracks and courses in the game so that they would be more accurately represented. Whether you're looking at details that are fer away or close up, you'll notice that everything fooks much better than before." The list that follows shows you all of the different locations in the game, and the variation in the races comes from running them in each directionalong with the addition of environmental effects, like rain, for different races.

### CLOSED-CIRCUIT COURSES

Fuji Speedway '80 (Japan) - The original Fuji Speedway, which was known as one of the fastest tracks in the world.

Fuji Speedway '90 (Japan) - The current Fuji' Speedway.

Fuji Speedway '05 (Japan) - The new Fuji Speedway to debut next year.

Tsukuba Circuit 2000 (Japan) – Sacred ground for testing various production and sports cars: in Japan.

Twin Ring Motegi - Full course and oval track (Japan) - International road course, and the only 1.5-mile oval course in Japan built for Indy Car racing. Suzuka Circuit - Fran Gourse (Japan) - The site: for the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix.

Laguna Seca Raceway (USA) – Located near Monterey, CA, this track returns from *Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec* but has been completely remodeled by the Polyphony team.

Infineon Raceway (USA) – Located in Sonoma

Intineon Naceway (USA) – Located in Sonoma County, near San Francisco, Infineon Raceway is a unique road course that plays host to NASCAR, NHRA, LeMans, and various other auto-racing competitions.

Nurburgring Nordschlaife (Germany) – The world's most challenging course is approximately 13 miles long and contains 176 turns. This track is known as a proving ground for many sports cars from around the world.

### CITY COURSES

Tokyo R246 – Returning from *Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec*, this track has been completely remodeled by the team.

Speattle - Also returning from *Gran Turismo 3.A.*Spec, this track now boasts a higher level of realism. The time setting has changed from sunset to middey with clear skies. New York City - This track is in the center of Manhattan and includes Broadway. Times

Square, Fifth Avenue, and Central Park. Hong Kong – Developed and created with full support from the Hong Kong Government Tourism Department. Les Vegas Drag Strip – A quarter-mile drag race down the Las Vegas Strip.

George V Paris – Race through the streets of Paris, on Les Champs-Elysees, and past such popular sites as the Arc de Triomphe. Opers Paris – Additional course through the streets of Paris.

Cote D'Azur - Racecourse through the streets of Monaco.

Citta di Aria – Racecourse through an Italian city. Costa di Amelfi – Race on the island of Capri in Italy.

NATURE- AND FANTASY-BASED COURSES Grand Canyon - The course runs along the rim

Grand Canyon – The course runs along the rim of the Grand Canyon and is ideally suited for rally racing

Ice Arena – A new rally-style course in the snow and ice that brings a new style of gemeplay to the series. Swiss Alps – The first of many fantasy courses

that returns from past *Gran Turismo* games, only completely remodeled.

Other reworked tracks include:

Grand Valley
Midfield Raceway
High Speed Ring
Tahiti Maze
Deep Forest
Autumn Ring
Special Stage Route 5

Trial Mountain Snow Lake Motorsports Land Autumn Maze Super Speedway Kashiwa









# MUSIC TO DRIVE BY

track selection is definitely more eclectic this time,"

UNITED THE PROPERTY OF SOME CONTRACT OF SOME music this time. G73 was probably a bit too mainstream for its or good, so we just looked for fast-paced stuff that we really liked

Here's the full track listing from the game. It's unlikely that Sony will be releasing it as a soundtrack CO.

"Slip and Slide" A Skillz "Stare the Car" Apollo 440 "Hals ran Brakes" Apple -"Runaround" Ario "So Long Baby Goodbye" The Blasters
"Let's Roll" Bootsy Collins "D-Greasy Rides" Bootsy Collins "Don't Mean a Thing" Borialis "Super Bad Part 1, 2 & 3" James Brown "Apology for Non Symmetry" Chronic Future "Machine Gun" The Commodores "Born Too Slow" (Remix) Crystal Method "Real Dream" Deepsky "Nitro" Dieselboy + Kaos

"Car Cresh" Dirty Americans Don't Went to Know The De Getaway Earth, Wind & Fire Once You Go, You Go Mentin Roll over DJ" Jet Freewheel Burning Judes Priess Short Burning Fuse Less Than Jake Gameplay Mr. Nature der" Papa Roac Not Listening" Papa Roach Funny Little Feeling" Rock N Holl Soldiers I Don't Care" The Roots You Must Follow" Stratus It Don't Mean Nothing" Will LAm Urop on You" Will JAm Rockstar" The Wylde Bunch Ready to Rock" X-Ecutione







### GRAN TURISMO 4 MIKE LTO FOCION

For the price of 33,600 yen (\$318), you can get a copy of the game, a Nike shirt, a pair of Shox sneakers, and an aluminum suffcase to carry the lot in. Only 1,000 examples of the set are planned (250 each of four shoe sizes) and sadly, it = 3 coming here. In roh the international-exclusivity in even further, the package also includes a cleverly hidden bonus item for the game. Snapping a picture of the pattem on the shirt with an EyeToy that is plugged in to 674 will unlock a hidden Nike One racecar which was designed. n collaboration with Nike and Saleen (who makes the amazing \$7 ugercár).

provide precise enough CAD data," Imasaki explains, "but for the most part, we'd line the cars up and process them. We'd have maybe 10 designers from the team come to the United States with their cameras and their recording gear, and we'd go and shoot the cars from every possible angle. For each car we'd take maybe 300 to 500 photos, and then we'd record about half an hour's worth of engine sounds to DAT There'd be a mic on the engine under the hood and one near the exhaust, and we'd record the engine sounds through the rev range. Sometimes we diprocess 50 cars like this at a time

With all of this attention to detail, how did the team react to the appar ent changing tastes of gamers when it comes to racing games? Since GT3, we've had Need for Speed Underground, a host of pretenders, and of course, Burnout 3 What if tastes are changing? "I think people will always appreciate what GT is," Imasaki says "It's a long term brand, it's an evergreen game. Think of it as being like classical music to their hip hop. We're the Rolex to their Spoon. There will always be games that tap into the current fashion, but GI doesn't work like that. Those guys will always need to look at what's next because they'll be forced to decorate their game based on what the current trend is. Right now, there are two other games coming out that follow our way of thinking. Microsoft is

working on Forza, and Korla nunas Enthusia, Kilnum - think may be tax ing the whole notion of realism, perhaps a little 1 - seriously but if thry get it right, it will maybe last longer. EA real and it while ago that they couldn't make Need for Speed or injete with Gran Turismo, so they very wisely took the franchise in a different direction.

But what of the changing fashir is with regard to pars? Surely, GT has to acknowledge the tastes that are dominated it are culture right now? Right now it's huge. Imasaxi all hits "but fir now long? We watch that stuff, obviously and we've integrated some of it into the game, but we have to be careful. Gran Turism mas to retain its in us. You I see tuner brands in the game, and there be a natro, sloppic a for the first time, but its more about acknowledging that culture rather than rebuild ing the game around it. Your garage in G14 nan hold 1,000 cars. If you want to, you could do 500 different monda Civics with every modithe. game offers, but that's still just a small part of what we're about

'We go to the SEMA [Specialty Equitment Market Association show every year, and we To the Gran Turismo Awards there and those tuner guys tell us that we should scoser up a fit masaki says but the bot tom line is that GT has to be the flagsh p game for the consoir so we have to acknowledge a much broader culture



# "I have systematically purged the earth of evil.

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# **L**REVIEWS

they're fun to rip apart.

SNAKE EATS SNAKES AND TAKES NAMES



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Octagone. Stomps. Ocs. Blarge. Call our rating symbols what you will just know the

my game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely medices, And a 0.57 Well. at is



SNAKE SHOWS US WHY HE'S BIG BOSS

At the end of Metal Gaer Bolld 2, Solid Snako seys, "We need to put the torch and let our children read our messy and said history by its light." Interestingly enough, MGS3 isn't a continuation of Solid and Otacon's attempts to solve the mystery of the Patriots—it's a piece of sad, messy history brought to light. It's the revelation of what shaped Big Boss (yes, you play him and only him, though he carries the code name "Snake" during the game) in 1984 to make him such a legend in the 21st century.

MGS3 is a throwback to not just the '60s, but to the overall experies of the original MGS. Kojima has scaled back on the sheer nonsense of . MGS2 and provided a more straightforward story for MGS3. While absurdity and conspiracy still play a role in the story, the actual objective is a lot easier to digest than the "you're playing a giant simulator of the previous game" plot of MGS2. In fact, not only is the story leaner and more focused—it's actually more personal and even character driven.

While MGS3 still carries the "nukes are bad" theme, the central story in more about Snake's own personal issues. The first part of the game, Operation Virtuous Mission, is a normal stealth mission that ends cateatrophically and gives way to Operation Snake Eater, which takes place August 30, 1964. The story still requires Snake to find and defeat a mechanical walking tank, but the real focus is on onake earning to price with the and of Virtuous Mission. Without spoiling it, Snaks goes through a lot of pein, both physical and emotional (oddly reminiscent of Rambo's as a result, the final boss battle inn't merely a fight against consone. We wave standing near a Metal Gear when it was destroyed—#2 amountains with a more personal and, strangely, emotional connection.

While the story has shed the gross excess of the previous games, gamesplay has been fleshed out more. MGS3 doesn't have the soliton radar, but its absence meets that you now have to manage three well-balanced substitutes: a notion detector that sees everything that's moving, a loud sonar device that detects everything, and a sensor that eucliby alerts you to enemies but has no issued component. The camera is more like MGSs than Spirmar Call's observingly, it does stilly things like sees toward Snake as the limited of the more than the consistency of the more like that the consistency of the like that the consistency of the like that the consistency of the like that the like the like that the lin

### WE PLAYED THEM FOR YOU MGS and MGS2 in the November issue, here's another one: base in Alaska, where he finds out the the lead designer for Metal Gear REX loves anime, is asked "Can love bloom on the batdefield?" and gets a lecture In MGS2 Solid Snake disoperative Raiden. Raiden gets naked, fights a whole lotta Metal Gear RAYs, and learns that the entire game inas an elaborate simulator based on MGS. Oh. and Liguid is living inside Revolver Ocelot's arm.

# SNAKE EATER

and then prepare for your targets is der Missemun steum require ling into your menu to change you low down an flow moment. If you want to move things a anily welcome to just me about your came everything with a shotgun.

There was much worning about the food system being a totally smooning agest in the gar a setually integrated fairly well—is to maintain and is a hassle only if you forget about it for two straight basis of a face of the straight season to obtain, and on top of that, most of that food does agently youd job or restoring your stamins. Only one area in perform a face and you get regularly, and besides that, so long as you comende to set the

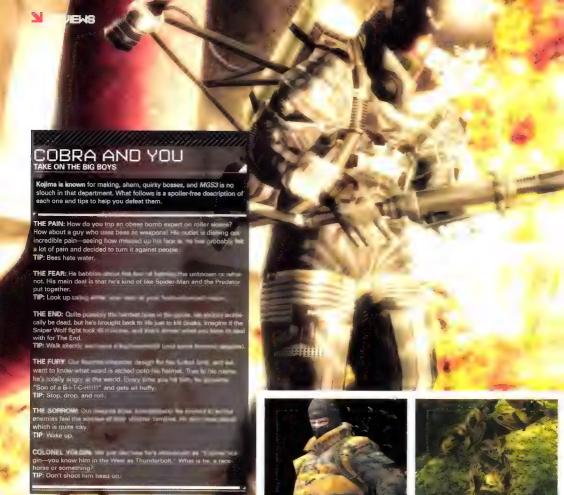
ere you treat serious wounds) ce, if you let it. Play as an aggresre likely to get shot or stabbed or penalty of treating those

# S. YOU PLAY BIG BOSS, AND NLY BIG BOSS. THE WHOLE TIME.

tagged, which means less treatment. However, everyor cure system during bear i e will run into the cure system during the going to get smacked around, and you'll have to treat your wounds as a result.

Besides the survival themed aspects of MGSSs gamppe, there's also

the close-quarters combat system, which makes combat a for more



interesting. No longer content with merely punching and grabbing guys. Snake now does slick grabs, slams, interrogations, and throat slashes. This enhanced move set is easily accomplished with a few presses of the Circle button and the 0-pad.

The whole experience takes a good 20 hours or so (17 if you rush it,

# THE END SEQUENCE IS AN UTTERLY ENGROSSING AND VISCERAL RIDE.

around 25 or so if you explore every nook) to get through. A base that takes up the last quarter of the game is about as big as half of Big Shell (MGSZ), and that's after the demo area, some forest, a warehouse, a lab, more forest, a mountain, and even more forest. The other outdoor area are more flexible and open-ended compared to the demo area and envi

ronments in previous games; that is, they are still filled with obvious paths, but there are less-obvious side passages that prove more advantageous (due to secret items or better visibility). These outdoor areas also push the PS2 to its limits—rendering lush foliage and fauna with nary a hiccup (except when it rains, or when you use smoke grenades). A battle in a field of lilles resembles a similar cut-scene in Final Fantasy VIII—with the difference that this lilly field is all smooth gameplay.

Even the cut scenes have been improved. While many still include stock footage, the cut scenes, overall, are "directed" better—the characters do more than stand in one place and dispense jibber-jabber. Kojima has also improved on his delivery of exposition a bit—rather than tell everything via codec, a lot of plot is now given in actual cut-scenes. There is still a big dose of verbiage (the ratio of game to-cinema is about 70/30, I'd say), but at least the talk is more interesting to look at this time.

The cut-scenes are also interactive—to an extent. When you hit R1, you often get an alternate perspective on the cut-scene (for example, when Snake looks through binoculars, hitting R1 shows you what he sees). Usu

The fight with The Fury is easily one of the best-looks boss battles in PS2 mistory









### KOJIMA'S FAVORITE FLICKS

SNAKE VERSUS APE

While Para-Medic will abber endlessly after every save segment, at (like Rose from MGS2) or give you random Chinese proverbe (as does Mei Ling from MGS). Instead she telks about movies she's seen and why she likes them. Even though these films, Para-Medic talks a great deal about them, and we can't help but think that these are movies that Kolima Illas also. Here are some: The Great Escapid The Blob The Guns of Neverses The Magnificent Seven Jason and the Argeneuts North by Northwest Dr Strangelove A Fistful of Dollars

ally, this is just a visual gimmick (it's also amusing when Snake first meets Eva, as he just looks at her chest), but occasionally, it shows valu able gameplay information. It can be information that you need later or a vital component that determines who wins a life-or-death battle

The most noteworthy part of the game is easily the end sequence. Without spoiling it, it's a chase that combines elements of MGS, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Return of the Jedi, The Legend of Zelda. The Wind Waker, and Ico into an utterly engrossing and visceral ride. Consider this end sequence Kojima's apology for making people put up with the nonsense of MGS2's ending. As good as the rest of the game is, this ending shines by creating a massive, over the top, exhilarating ride

One could easily point to problems, like the camera or the silly dia logue or how the end sequence is mostly a rail shooter, but the entire package gels together into a cohesive experience. Analytically breaking it down means that MGS3 is just a very good survival-stealth game coupled with a semihokey story, but taken as a whole, it's easily one of the best experiences on the PS2. ( Third y Na. ye

VAKE: Less nonsensical story, better boses, better eneaking and fighting, best ending sequence out of all three games RAIDEN: It's still an MGS-style game, so haters of pomificating cut-scenes and non-Splinter Cell camera systems can keep on hating

ab. Konami Dev. Konami ESRB M MSRP \$49.99

REFERENCES TO OTHER MGS GAMES:

Horror of Dracula





### RUMBLE ROSES

TIME FOR A SHAKEDOWN



From the makers of WWE SmackDown! comes Rumble Roses—a bouncy, bodacious girl-on-girl grapplefest with hardcore catfights and mud wrestling mayhem. Gratuitous, over-the-top action in the ring is sand-wiched between sequences that are part pageant, part pornographer on a field day with his digital camera. Unfortunately, there is so much eye candy to chew through that even the biggest jiggling-pixel fans out there will soon be impatiently button mashing to get the real match started

At least the wrestling itself is more than a button-pounding free-for-all There are plenty of attacks, throws, submission holds, and humiliation tactics to master via the solid control scheme, and you won't last long with out perfecting some of them. Your hard work will be rewarded with a cam era that uses audicious angles to capture the juiciest bits of action. But it is the exhibition mode's mechanics that add an ounce of depth to a poten fally shallow experience, allowing you to set up custom match challenges

Story mode offers standard fare, skipping character development and focusing more on rivalries via a bizarre backstory about a naughty nurse, Anesthesia. The voice acting and writing are terrible, but honestly, nobody will buy this game for "the articles." Your efforts will unlock various new characters (20 in all) and the all important alternate biking.

Rumble Roses is a visual treat with a solid wrestling engine beneath it, and there is no question for whom this game is meant. Ill admit it's nice to play as a girl instead of watching one prance around the ring for the boys. Unfortunately, the experience bogs down amidst the sex appeal; for a game with such an overage of cleavage, it's ironic that after a couple hours, Rumble Roses stants to feel flat.

IPHOS Impressive graphics, easy-to-pick-up controls, smooth gameplay CONS Long-winded intros/loads, horrific script, limited customization

Pub. Konami Dev. Yuke's ESRB M MSRP \$39.99

PATING



### WWE SMACKDOWN! US. RAW

VEAH, THERE'S SOME PAIN COMING



If you love the WWE, this is your game. If you love pro wrestling...well, then it's going to be a tougher decision. Now that Yuke's has a monopoly on PS2 wrestling, the prospects for evolution in grappling gameplay aren't so bright.

The season mode in SmackDown! vs. RAW still destroys any competition. It's an almost seamless simulation of the TV product—the angles are simple, and there are occasional gaps in logic, but at least they don't involve corpses or the birth of plastic hands. While THC's experiment with spoken dialogue this year fails—the acting is frequently passable, but the mixing and lip-synch are absolutely terrible—what was good in last year's Here Comes the Pain is still solid during a season and in the ridiculously versatile wrestlere adit mode.

Everything eise about SmackDown!, though, is wearing out its welcome. In the ring, inconsistencies abound—weird collision detection, neutred submission moves, and A.I. that switches between being timid and simply schizoid. The new Def Jam may have had brutally difficult opponents, but at least they were consistently logically challenging. In a Yuke's game, logic sometimes takes the night off.

That takes some of the shine away from a huge selection of match modes and the new addition of online multiplayer (the online mode is pretty bare, only allowing single matches, but it's a step in an interesting direction). Given the absence of any real competition in this genre, it also doesn't inspire a lot of hope for the future ( ).









STIFF SHOTS Season mode hits the mark, and you can design practically anything in the character editor MISSED SPOTS We still want consistent legical action in the ring DUSTY FAMSH Great simulated fiction, but the guts of it aren't improving

Pub. THQ Dev. Yuke's ESRB T MSRP \$49.99

RATING



NEW DEADLY COMBO SYSTEM

DYNAMIC POLE AND BAIL COMBAT

(And a complex of itter new firstons, with

ODRAYNE

BLOODRAYNE REBERLS THE FRANCHISE, MAKING IT UNFOR THE PRANCHISE, IN GAMING HIGOCOM BLOODRAYNEZ: COM



Blood and Gore Intense Violence Sexual Themes Strong Language



PlayStation 2











Back in the days when no one thought an unassuming plumber could be removed from his throne, along came a blue hedgehog by the name of Sonic. Not only did he provide Sega with its first real mascot, but Sonic made Sega one of the biggest players in the industry. This collection almost perfectly illustrates why Sonic achieved what he did.

Nearly all of the Genesis incarnations of Sonic's adventures hold up surprisingly well Each serves as a shining example of what happens when you mix short attention spans with excellent level design. Unfortunately, this recipe grew thresome after a while, and so Sega tried to dapt by adding more furnes and making the gameplay a little more dynamic, but something was lost in the process—as evidenced by Somus & Knuckles and the horrible Sonic 30 Blast

As for the rest of the games in the collection (the non-Genesis games), don't bother. The poor

Game Gear hardware just didn't have enough power to do adequate Genesis ports, so instead, Sega gave us the garbage known as *Sonic Labyrinth* and *Sonic Drift*. Fans may appreciate that Sega included these games for the sake of history, though most will probably be disappointed by the no-show of *Sonic CD*, which is widely regarded as one of the best in the series.

Oddly enough, Comix Zone and Rister are also part of the package; while they aren't Sonic games, they definitely represent finer moments of the Genesis, making the package worthwhile for hardcore fans. « • • • • •





### POING EVETOY PROUD

Now this is how you do licensed material Eye-Toy style: Take a healthy selection of popular franchises, think long and hard about the best way for the player to control them without actually touching anything, and throw them into a broad, varied, and affordable package.

While some games work better than others, most are surprisingly interesting and fun. Take Virtua Fighter, for example: At first glance it may appear to be nothing more than a repurposing of the boxing game on EyeToy's Play disc, but in actuality, it's a lot more satisfying. By presenting targets to aim for (and introducing a block mechanic), the game feels much more focused

There are a couple other games that are only slight modifications of *Play* titles, like House of the Dead (see Kung Foo) or Virtua Striker (Keep Ups), but these tend to be improvements on the original Even better are the completely novel ideas, like the fantastic flying interface in

NiGHTS or the tilt-and-roll system for Super Monkey Ball. And then, of course, there are the no-brainers, like the rhythm-based Samba de Amigo and Space Channel 5. In fact, there's only one true dud in the whole bunch Crazy Taxi

Beyond that, the games range from the simple and diverting to the fascinating and surprisingly complex. The addition of the Chao Gar den—in which you hatch, feed, and entertain a Chao—makes the whole game substantially deeper than any EyeToy title I've seen so far Granted, that isn't hard to do, but it's still a very pleasant surprise (4

PROS Surprising depth for an EyeToy game

rub. Sega Dev. Sega ESRB T MSRP \$29.99







## APE ESCAPE

Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped is a prototypical party game-those who'll enjoy it most are probably either under the age of 8 or are enjoying herbal refreshments. The learning curve isn't much of an issue, and repetition is the order of the day. Battle your way through a tournament alone or with up to four players in deathmatches, coin collection, races...and that about sums it up. The arenas change-you're on foot, you're in a boat, you're flying-but the battles themselves are pretty stagnant. Gadgets at your disposal range from stun clubs to slingshots to remote-controlled cars, and can be used in combos that deliver some devastating moves, but the available combos per character is limited to about seven. You primarily control attacks by spinning your right analog stick. If you're less than sober or very small, this makes the game quite accessible. If you're neither of these, it can bring on



and the second second

carpal tunnel syndrome. So what's the hook's Monkeys. Lots of them. Pipo Monkey is playable for the first time in an Ape Escape game. Or, play as Team Monkey, which offers, scoording to the manual, "five Pipo monkeys in different colored pants!" Or check out Pipotron, the "mysterious" monkey team who, in my opinion, are either robots that look like monkeys or monkeys possessed by Satan. If you create a custom character in story mode, "good things may happen!" (says the manual); perform well and you'll get a Monkey Fan Club, which will support you withgits and...fan mail! Yes, like little simins

Fan Club will send you letters of praise. Ultimately, though, even "five Pipo monkeys in different colored pants!" aren't enough to make the same repeated games and gadgets interesting—unless you're a 7-year-old or a stoner. But that is, like many party games, probably who this game is for anyway, and if so, it succeeds. The rest of you will want pass on yet another repetitive party game. «Kristen Shattore"

Shakespeares, members of your Monkey

VERDICT Monkeys wearing pants are good for a laugh—but only briefly.

th Ubisoft Dev. Sony CEA ESRB E MSRP \$39.99



SHAKE, SHAKE, SHAKE











# **LOTR: THE THIRD AGE**

Most console RPGs, whether a Final Fantasy title or a Suikoden, attempt to meld storytelling and combat, so it makes sense for EA to want to sta ple the proven Final Fantasy formula to the grandiose Lord of the Rings storytelling that's lasted some 50-odd years. Unfortunately, what results is a repetitive bore of a game taped onto a movie that everyone's already

The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age's battle system is essentially FFX with a tenowar (elvish) font. Three-member parties, swapping said party members, and turns and their effect on timing all seem reverse-engineered from Squenix's formula. Heck, there are even victory dances-I almost expected FF's trumpet to blare in triumph after my first battle

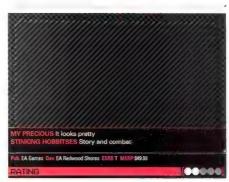
While the battle system is solid, the battles themselves are dreadfully boring. Due to the movie license, the enemies can only be in-movie crit ters. Which means you literally spend five hours in a row fighting the same damn uruk-hai/warg/goblin/fell beast group over and over and over and over and over again. Helm's Deep is usually the breaking point for most players, as it plants you in one place and forces you to go through a crazy amount of battles with respayning uruk har Apparently, TTA doesn't really use traditional boss battles, it just liberally uses the copy-and-paste command. To top it off, the random-battle frequency seems to want to challenge Skies of Arcadia in the "Most Battles per Square Inch" arena, as one can literally walk two steps and land in a battle. More infuriating, I was the victim of an instance where I put the controller down, typed up this paragraph, and noticed that a battle was triggered, despite me standing still onscreen for the previous minute

In between the craptacular combat are the spazzy looking exploration and the boring menu screens. Combat is so frequent that you basically level up every two battles and equip random items in your inventory. If you're not fighting yet another ward, you're once again juggling numbers around on a character sheet. Since the characters are clones based on Fellowship members, you end up not even caring about your characters and their stats

The integration with the films is simply bizarre. While it's occasionally clever and sensible (being on the receiving end of Pippin's accident in Balin's Tomb), the rest is shoehorned manity. Most of the "story" has you trailing the Fellowship and basically experiencing their leftovers. More

egregious is how the much-vaunted Balrog fight, while visually spectacular lar, stretches credibility. According to TTA, in the 10 seconds it takes between Gandalf proclaiming "You shall not pass!" and the Balrog falling into the Shadow, four random people came by and helped Gandalf take it down. Uh, right, Not to mention the oddly reedited dialogue (characters will "talk" with you, except with dialogue that was lifted from a different scene in a wholly different context) or the "reward" of watching scenes from the movies but with new voiceovers by lan McKellen

One cannot deny the visual work poured into this game (the effects are spectacular, and it's neat to see your equipped items actually appear in cut scenes), but that's about it. When you're essentially playing the stunt dou bies of the nonhobbit members of the Fellowship in order to see redupped movie clips, you might as well cut out the middleman and just watch the movies all over again instead. «





### NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2005 US. ESPN COLLEGE HOOPS 2K5

HOOPIN' ON UP

### OFFENSE

The best thing about College Hoops offensive game this year is that it actually feels a little more like a college game—this version does a better job of re-creating the hectic nature of college baskerball than its predecessor. Also, the new passing option that lets receivers catch a pass in stride while cutting to the basket is very helpful and makes for some genumely exciting play options. However, College Hoops' controls are still pretty stiff since many of the IsoMotion moves require you to wait through a relatively lengthy animation before you can take control of the ball handler. There's still some way to go before College Hoops feels like a real college basketball game, but this is a step in the right direction.

Conversely, if you played last year's version of March Madness, you can expect more of the same. As always, the freestyle control is helpful in slicing up the defense to create some open shots, but the biggest new feature in March Madness is the floor general play-calling system. This allows you to call slightly more complicated plays out on the court, and while it adds some strategy to your offensive game, it's somewhat superfluous since the basic plays take less time to set up and can often be equally effective.

Winner: NCAA March Madness 2005

### DEFENSE

This is where College Hoops can't match March Madness. Again, the development team for this year's College Hoops has done a better job of making sure that the ball handler feels the pressure of a trap or a wacky zone defense, but you never really have to fight too hard to break through. To the game's credit, defenses do a better job of intercepting errant passes, but it's still a little too easy to wildly fling the ball around the court or even throw a sharp pass through two or three defenders to a man cutting to the basket.

The defensive game in March Madness 2005 is excellent, but at the same time, it's essentially the same as it was last year. Defenders run great half-court raps and presses, and consistently do a good job of playing tough zones and performing switches when a man is out of position. The floor general system also works on defense, but it's not all that different from calling standard defensive sets.

Winner, NCAA March Madness 2005

### DYNASTY/LEGACY MODES

The differences between the main modes in both games largely come down to interface design. College Hoops' legacy mode is much more elegant and interesting. When you explore the individual options that the legacy mode has to offer, you'll actually want to use them because everything is so nicely laid out and easy to navigate. Plus, there is just a ton of stuff to mess around with, ranging from different coaching styles to ESPN.com-style rankings and updates.

Don't get me wrong, March Madness' dynasty mode has plenty to offer too, and in some cases, it goes into even more depth than College Hoops' legacy mode. In fact, it goes so deep that you have to be watchful of how you discipline players, because if they get out of control or if your school violates too many NCAA regulations, then you can be voted out of your original conference. Still, the navigation isn't quite as good as it is in College Hoops, even with the PDA device ripped from NBA Live that gives you updates on various aspects of your team.

Winner: ESPN College Hoops 2K5

### E8PN COLLEGE HOOPS 2K5

MROS Better college feel, great online and legacy modes, cheap CONS Controls need tweaking, still has a bit of a pro feel

Prob. ESPN Videogames Dev. Visual Concepts ESRB E MSRP \$19.99

PATING















### ONLINE

For the online play, it basically comes down to this—College Hoops 2K5 has all the features that March Madness 2005 has and more. In addition to curnaments, messaging services, and stat tracking, there are leagues where you can play seasons with anyone around the country. Of course, much boils down to which game plays better online, and for that, March Madness definitely earns some kudos. But College Hoops wins it here for variety of features

Winner ESPN College Hoops 2K5

### **EXTRAS**

The games' extra features are pretty similar. There are a bunch of collectible Items and goodies to unlock by playing through the game. College Hoops has create-a-player and create a-college options, as well as a coaching mode that lets you sit on the sideline and call plays while the action happens out on the court. But its best extra feature is undoubtedly the air hockey table. March Madness offers classic teams, clothing, and a new college classic mode where you can relive some of college basketball's most famous moments—it's just too bad that there are so few moments like that in the game.

Winner Tie

« Same ir i varanın

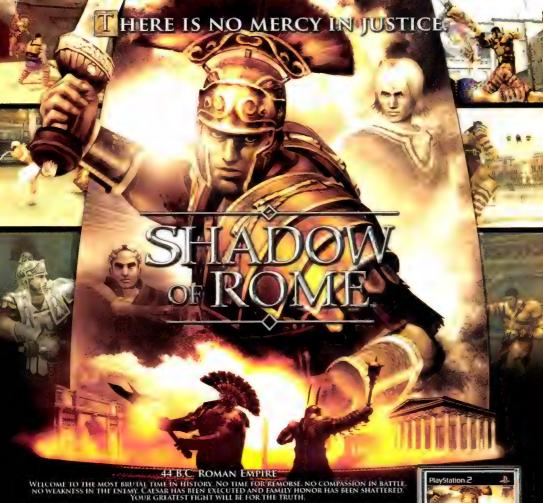
### NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2005

NROS Great representation of college basketball, responsive controls CONS Kinda like last year, floor general mode is nice but not a big deal

Pub. EA Sports Dev. EA Sports ESRB E MSRP \$39.99

RATING







INTENSE GLADIATOR ARENA FIGHTING



FAST PACED CHARIOT RACES AND BATTLES



CHARACTER SWITCHING FOR INFO GATHERING AND PUZZLE SOLVING MISSIONS





CAPCOM

PlayStation.2

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# PURE POP

# KING ARTHUR

When I watched the first few making-of King Arthur video clips (cloted out as rewards for finishing the game's mindnumbing levels), I thought they were funny. So many unlovable movies these days see release on DVDs stuffed with storyboards, interviews, and random production debris. For an unlovable game to follow suit seemed both inevitable and ridiculous.

"Who are they kidding?!! Who gives a damn?!!" I asked se I worked up my usual melodramatic indignation (which, like many of my countrymen, I take great pleasure in). The game is one long wave of monotonus, sloppy combat, with your chosen character helplessly flailing around in the midst of neaver-ending enemy mobe, your television stimed in dull grays and browns slicad here and there by ugly, stupid effects (who decided to use toxic green clouds to represent healing?). The levds, book-unded by long, unskippable scenes from the movie.



end abruptly after some unseid goal is complete (usually the arse kicking of a few hundred faceless, grunting clones in loincloth. That anyone would want to get a "behind the scenes" look at this crap is hillarious.

After watching a few more of these clips, though, it all started to depress me: moving ectors getting facial scens, stuntmen awinging swords around in a motion-capture studio, sets from the movie rendered in detail, all these folks working hard. How many hours of precious time were wested on a game that few will play and fewer will enjoy? I feel pangs of regret having only played it. Imagine how you'd feel if you were the guy they hired to painstakingly reproduce horse carts and grass huts. Life is too short for this game. 4K Robert Ashley

# THE URBZ. SIMS IN THE CITY

Say good-bye to the burbs—the Sims have finally moved to that deluxe apartment in the sky.

So what's better about city living? Needs are more streamlined than in previous games, with only five items to keep an eye on, which makes it easier to focus on fulfilling your goals. My favorite is the elimination of the Room need, allowing me to let my apartments become sties without it depressing my Urb.

Goals and information about your Urb are displayed neatly on a PDA, which is a nice, clean way of organizing the information. One of the best improvements over past Sims games is the inclusion of minigames for skill building and job tasks. They re incredibly basic, but it's amazing how much of a difference it makes to be doing something rather than just watching your Sim. The rewards system is also well designed, continually dishing out items to the player for achieving goals along the way.

The game's big downfall is that it ends up being repetitious, even for a Sims game. In your first neighborhood, you figure out the basics of getting the right wardrobe, schmoozing people, and making money. And then that's about it. While the other neighborhoods (which are unlocked as your rep increases) have different styles, the gameplay is the same in all of them. It's nice for people who don't like to lose and

who take comfort in sameness, and there is an addictiveness that can suck you in, but when you step away from the game, it's shocking how shallow it is.

This shallowness extends beyond the game-play. Urbz is more targeted toward women than previous Sims titles (Build your wardrobel Hang out with your friends!), but older Sims fats may be put off by the MTV vibe of the game. Female Urbz are clad almost exclusively in skimpy clothes—if your thong isn't hanging out, then it's a safe bet that you'll at least be wearing a shirt cut down to your belly button. And people's reactions to you depend more on what you're wearing than anything else—as long as you look like them, it's easy to be accepted.

It's rather like cotton candy—fun if insubstantial, without any redeeming nutritional value. But there are times when cotton candy hits the spot just fine & Dana renginward

CUTTING-EDGE STYLE Better graphics, streamlined needs, improved skill building SO FIVE YEARS AGO Really repetitive gamepley

ESRB T MSRP \$49.99



INSTEAD...
Watch the entire Level of the Rings trilogy, read both Hamilet and Rine-beth, hit on and make out with a hot level 35 eff at a taken and a service of the woods, spend a day at a Senaissance fair in full other mail.

VERDICT A massive movie's effort wasted on a subper medieval action game

b. Konami Dev. Krome Studios ESRB T MSRP \$39.99



# TREE SAP MAY HARM CONTROLLER.





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### REVIEWS













































Hardcore gamers usually vehemently oppose charges that videogames are "just for kids," citing the evidence that is hitting shelves every week between now and the end of the year. As a reaction to this, the games that are specifically designed to be "just for kids" are overlooked or dismissed by many, and even the publishers dial back the hyperbole so as to not divert attention from the big-budget adult fare. It's time for this to change, though. Gamers are getting older and having kids of their own, and much as our 6-year-olds are probably better at takedowns in Burnout 3 than we are, it's time to pay closer attention to the games specifically aimed at younger players. Let's face it: We're all guilty of secretly watch-

**FOURTEEN KID-SAFE GAMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS** 

ing Nickelodeon from time to time, and there's no denying that good kids' entertainment can frequently tickle the funny bone of even the most cynical and jaded gamers.

Every year, games focused on the younger end of the market sneak out and quietly set sales records. You want proof? The last SpongeBob SquarePants game on PS1 outsold Jak and Daxter. This year there are some truly superb games rated "E for Everyone," which is information any of you who are parents will likely be extremely pleased to hear. Some of them are so good, though (like SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie. which we reviewed last month), that everyone should check them out.

### FAIRLY OOD PARENTS: SHADON SHONDONN

WANDS AND WINGS, FLOATY CROWNY THINGS



There's plenty to like about THO's Shadow Showdown, especially if you're a fan of Nick's wacky show. The game's style is faithful to the cartoon, and the script and voices are just as goofy as you'd hope. Cosmo, in particular, raises plenty of laughs with his dim-witted asides and bizarre observal tions, as do Inmmy's parents and the ever-stole Joreen von Strangle

The game plunders a host of scenarios from the show for gameplay cues, whether it's the space-age platforming of Crash Nebula or the superheroic exploits of Cleft the Boy Chin Wonder. Objectives are mostly simple puzzle-solving exercises; run here, collect this, open that, jump on this, it's easy enough for very young gamers, but not so dull that watching parents will not off

As seems to be the trend with kids' games this year, the main game is supplemented by six two-player minigames (three of which must be unlocked) that are all particularly fun for kids to play with each other or for parents who want to join in the fun, too

Complaints? It's a bit expensive for what you get. Considering the value of games like *Ty 2*, the additional \$20 you're paying here brings little more than recognizable Nickelodeon characters.







ROS Fans of the show will dig the humor and graphics

Pub. THO Day. Blitz Games ESRB E MSRP \$39.99

DATING



# NOT REALLY INCREDIBLE, BUT STILL PRETTY GOOD



Tis the holiday season, when greed reigns supreme and hot movie properties are marketed every which way to squeeze another dollar from your pocket. So does *The Incredibles* deserve more of your free-flowing cash?

As with most of the other film-based games we've seen, the story follows the move, and cut-scene from the film link the whole thing together While it's tough to compete with a film as gorgeous as *The Incredibles*, the game does a good job of holding its own. You get to fight in a variety of environments, and the colors are as vivid as those in the film.

Getting to play as five different characters is a lot of fun, as each character has different moves that correspond with their specific superpower. Attack mechanics are simple, but the animations that accompany them are pretty neat—go through a room as Mr. Incredible and punch out three or four villans at a time, or watch as Elastiguri stretches her arms and plucks villains hovering in the air above her. The different powers lend themselves to different styles of levels as well; for example, Dash's levels focus on races rather than combat

Some areas of the game are fairly simple, but there are parts that are just stinking hard. This is tolerable when it's just a difficult sequence to master, but it's furstrating when the difficulty stems from less-than-responsive controls. Boss battles can be quite lengthy affairs, and when you spend 20 minutes in a battle against a gigantic six-legged robot only to have to face it again one level later, it gets a bit tedious.

Titles that can be played by the whole family are few and far between, but this is one of them. Don't be too put off by the T-rating, if you're fine with your kids seeing the movie, the game is safe.

HEROIC Nice variety of superpower-wielding fun, great graphics EVIL Not-so-polished controls, repetitive boss battles

Pub. THQ Dov. Heavy from ESRS T MSRP \$39.99

DATIN IO

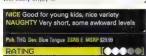




The Polar Express is a series of minigames that range from steering through obstacle courses to completing simple rhythm-based levels, con necting the games into a cohesive plot are scenes from the film of the same name (which you can skip past if you find the CB effects as creepy as the OPM editors do). One of the better levels is reminiscent of a 2D classic like Donkey Kong—you hop your way through a pile of presents to get to the top.

The game is very short, just a few hours at most. However, for those who have an EyeToy, there are a couple of minigames included as bonus content. In one, you decorate a Christmas tree while fending off puppets who try to steal your ornaments; in another you drive the Polar Express while trying not to smash snowmen.

The game's simplicity makes this a question able choice for anyone over 8, but young kids will likely enjoy it.





Movin' includes some excellent tre-ins with some of Nick's hottlest toons, like EyeToy: Play, Movin' provides precious little depth, but as a way of getting the kids up out of their seats, the collection works nearly as well.

It's worth noting, though, that the games in Play are fairly simple, so Movin' isn't a must-buy for adults. Several games are Nick-branded retreads of Play's games, and a couple (the Jimmy Neutron-therned Deflect-o-Matic and the Danny Phantom-based Portal Party) are just boring.

But a few are absolutely hysterical and use the EyeToy in interesting ways. Fairly Odd Invasion, for example, puts your picture inside a clear ball as you paddle your hands to roll over invading robots; the *Rocket Power* game Hanging Out lets players tilt their arms to steer a hang glider. These are outnumbered by the more "bleh" games, but with the package costing a mere \$20, it hardly matters

HTS Bowling, boating, beating up bots MISSES Sliding puzzles, blatant *Play* knockoffs

Pub. THQ. Dev. Mass Media ESRB E MSRP \$19.99



Yep, it's another kids' game based on a movie license and composed of a series of minigames that are connected by clips from the blockbuster CG animated film. These 25 levels under the sea include stealth missions, search missions, little fighting games, and rhythm games. Each level has three different passing ranks, and you get different rewards depending on how well you do.

The games themselves are decent, but the camera can be really awkward at times. Some times it's merely annoying, but other times, it seriously hampers your ability to play the game. One level makes you dodge jellyfish tentacles, but the camera continually circles, so you can't always see which way they're striking.

This is your average uninspired kids' game, but it's seriously overprized at \$50—\$30 would have been a much more appropriate price point for what you get.





Why are kids' games so often more frustrating than their adult-oriented counterparts? Tak 2 is -both manually and cerebrally—considerably more challenging than any of this season's big platformers. The puzzle oriented gameplay is introduced well, but before long, your youngster will need to start seriously exercising problem solving skills to figure out how best to exploit the woodland creatures in and around Tak's world. This would be great by itself, but the unresponsive controls and often flagrantly uncooper attive camera will stretch your tyke's patience

If your tot's not prone to temper tantrums, though, there's a lot to like, including lush envi ronments, cartoony animals that form the basis of the game's puzzles, and some truly hysterical dialogue made particularly funny by the voice work of Patrick Warburton (Seinfeld, The Tick). As long as you and yours can stand some frus tration, it's a solid purchase.

PROS Lush graphics, animal-based puzzles CONS Horrendously ugly dream world

ub. THQ Dev. Avalenche Software ESRB E MSRP \$39.99



Imagine a game like Nintendo's Super Smash Bros., only everything that makes Smash Bros. good sin't actually in it. Digmon Rumble Arena 2 has all of the basic elements of a fun brawling game; however, it's anything but that. Part of the problem is the fighting mechanics, which are so mind-numbingly simple that a cat licking the controller could probably win a few battles. In fact, if you just close your eyes and press the Square button repeatedly, you shouldn't have any problems on most stages. Digwolved versions of characters usually have only two or three worthwhelm proves and the same basic compliantons.

The only aspect of the game helping it avoid becoming a complete disaster are the arenas. A tot of them have some excellent interactivity that lets you destroy the objects in the background. They look really nice for the most part, but the gameplay cancels out any fun you might have in them. <<







In most cases, dinosaurs are awesome, but the cast of lizards in Power Rangars. Dino Thunder doesn't do it for me. It's not totally the dinosaurs' fault the game is just inherently tedious. Instead of a straightforward fast-paced action game, Dino Thunder is set up as a series of missions that don't amount to much more than fetch quests. You're told to fetch bones, fly through circles, and kill a specific type of enemy multiple times, and it just cets irritations.

The so-called action portions of the game don't do *Dino Thunder* any favors, either. Targeting is mostly automatic, so when you shift the camera around, the computer automatically selects the closest thing to your character. This does you no good when you're surrounded by a group of enemies and trying to hit a specific target *Dino Thunder* is obviously trying to mimic the feel of free roaming gameplay, but it fails to be entertaining about it.



PROS Giant robot dinosaurs, only \$20
CONS Mission structure is boring and tedious

tub. THO Dev. Pacific Coast ESRB E MSRP \$19.99



Sitting Ducks is one of the largest kid games to hit the market-in essence, it's an E-rated GTA Play the main missions to further the story, run around the town, collect objects, earn vehicles, upgrade vehicles-there's a top to do, and it's wrapped up into a very endearing package

I really want to like this game, but a couple of things get in the way. Controls are wonky, which could be frustrating for young players, It's difficult to avoid bumping into things; what's worse is that those bumps cause you to lose feathers, the game's currency. Also, the minimap marking mission locations has no roads marked, so you spend a lot of time running into dead ends before you finally get to where you want to go

A lot of care was put into building the game, which makes its flaws all the more frustrating However, it is only \$10, so if your child has the patience of a saint, plop down the money and

ERDICT Awesome gameplay is brought down by construction flaws.

Pub. Hip Interactive Dev. Hip Interactive ESRB E MSRP \$9.99



Jimmy Neutron is a fine role model in that he teaches kids that wacky objects and doohickeys can be made by common household objects. Of course, the real-world wisdom of attaching magnets to your shoes is questionable, but at least it tells kids to create rather than destroy

This objective-based platformer (structured as a series of "episodes" that center on Jimmy accidentally bringing the Twonkies back to Earth) features lots of puzzles that require inventions to solve. To make these inventions, Jimmy has to find random objects scattered throughout the game world and figure out how to put them together to get what he needs. In between hoof ing around and inventing things, you get to pilot Jimmy's rocket and blast asteroids and other floating detritus

The actual platforming is fairly blasé, It's a solid-enough game with neat invention based hooks, but that's about it

VERDICT A standard platformer with edutaining invention-based puzzles.

Pub. THO Day. THO ESRB E MSRP \$19.99



Vu Vu Hakusho is a show about the adventures. of a spirit detective who participates in a massive tournament. In this game based on the anime, you compete in the 32 match tournament (complete with clips from the show) and other fighting staples, as well as the "token game," which is a card game stapled onto a checkers set. As expected, there's a host of playable characters straight from the show

YYH's problem is with the controls, which are shallow yet complicated. The move set isn't very large or complex, but doing simple things like jumping or ducking requires you to hold down the D-pad and X button-which means any combos that start from either a crouch or a jump become annoyingly hard to pull off. This is a serviceable fighter for fans of the franchise, but if your kids want to learn how to fight, why not get an actual fighting game with good controls and moves instead?





Not being 6-years-old. I have only a fragment of a clue as to who Yu Gi Oh is and what he does. I do understand this game, though, which is a vanilla strategy-RPG Move your pieces around a board and try to eliminate your opponent's pieces first. Each monster has a specific move ment and attack range and carries attributes that are decently balanced (fire is weak against water, which is weak against wind, which is weak against wood, which is weak against fire, and so on). The battlefield itself occasionally changes shape, which merits extra attention, your units gain experience and can even fuse with each other; and the A.I. is competent (there's also a multiplayer mode if you tire of fighting the PS2)

If you're a Yu-Gi-Oh! fan who knows what the heck a Cockroach Knight is, then you understand this game much better than I (or anyone over 15) do. For the rest of us, it's a passable strategy RPG

VERDICT A competent intro to strategy-RPGs, and manna from heaven for Yu-Gi-Oh! fans.

Pub. Konami Dev. Konami ESBB E MSRP \$39.99





Don't let the absurdity of robotic Gundams with superdeformed heads dissuade you from this game. What you get is a surprising little action based dungeon crawler-think of it as Devil May Cry with loot or Diablo with cute little robots You take a goofy looking bobbleheaded Gun dam, teleport into a level, smack some stuff up. and collect orbs from fallen enemies. In between levels, you can buy items to help you for the next round. For characters, you have your good all around Capt. Gundam, graceful winged knight Zero, and sword loving samurai Bakunet sumaru. As with many games, the camera could use a fair bit of work, and older gamers might find the action a bit on the repetitive side, with not enough variance to keep their interest.

If you want to impart the important skills of twitchily thwacking bad dudes in dungeons on to a younger sibling, SD Gundam Force: Show down! is a good start.

ERDICT A solid dungeon crawler with brightly colored, enthusiastic Gundams. Puls. Bandai Dev. Tom Create ESRB E MSRP \$39.99



Tv 2 seems to have it all: a huge open environment, gorgeous graphics, superb production values, myriad fluffy animals with Australian accents (what is it with kids' entertainment and Australians these days? Kids' television is full of them), and a ton of different gameplay styles, from giant robot combat to basic hop-n bop action. On top of that, it has a seven level twoplayer splitscreen kart-racing game, and it's an entire penny shy of 20 bucks. It's easily superior to many games in the genre, and at times it seems to be nipping at the heels of the likes of Jak and Ratchet. It skews a little older than some of the games featured here (tackling the topic of diplomatic immunity, among others, which is probably over the head of the average 8-year old), and although firmly in the kids' camp, it's something that anyone can enjoy, thanks to the great controls and terrific variety in the gameplay

VERDICT It's quite a lot of game for not a lot Pub. EA Games Dev. Kroma Studios ESRB E MSRP \$19.99



If you want a little kidfree PS2 time to indulge your darker side, then put your kids in front of the PC and steer them toward <u>Nick.com</u>. The young'uns can spend hours of entertainment with Flash games based on some of Nickelodeon's most popular ranchises

















# VIENTIFUL JOE 2

Viewtiful Joe was one of the better pure action games released this year, with its slick celshaded 2D art style, crazy and comic presentation, and well-honed beat-em-up gameplay mechanics. Viewtiful Joe 2 maintains the sensibilities of the previous crazy caper while adding some interesting new tweaks and features.

As much as VJ1 is an homage to Ultraman and comic books, VJ2 goes further with the crazy riffs on pop culture-movies especially. The first level combines Jurassic Park with war movies. A later level is a martial artist filled village that wouldn't be out of place in Fist of the White Lotus (which itself was referenced in Kill Bill. One of the enemies you take on is a mechanical, VJ-styled version of those pesky aliens that Sigourney Weaver is always fighting. Voltron fans will get a kick out of a new mode of the Six Six Machine (which itself has new iterations-a sub and a drill-for side scrolling levels). Heck, the story centers on Joe and Silvia hunting for the "Rainbow Oscars" before the Black Emperor can snag them.

While Silvia was an unlockable character in VJ1, she's now part of a key gameplay element in VJ2. Early reports of VJ2 sporting a two-player cooperative mode are inaccurate—the cooperative mode actually means that you switch between Joe and Silvia on the fly (just fix). The all-new Replay power (which allows you to perform one action thnce, such as hitting a button/enemy for puzzles or triple damage, or eating a burger for triple health) is exclusive to Silvia, so you have to switch to her for some of the puzzles.

VJ2 has some serious puzzles going on. VJ1 mixes up its beat-em-up action with occasional brainteasers, and VJ2 ups the brain-wracking count. Buttons must be pushed, massive hamster wheels must be rotated, candles must be lit,

and rooms must be slid back and forth. In fact, I often had a harder time figuring out what to do than how best to punch my way past some boss.

For this round, the bosses are even more bizarre than before, they range from a recurring dinosaur who sports a different costume for each level (I particularly like his drill sergeant and kung fu master getups) to a mad scientitis squid to a gigantic missile-launching Buddha Oh, and there's also what is either the best or worst name-based pun ever, a lizard boss named "Cameo Leon." There's even a boss who is essentially the love child of the Death Star and Unicron. While VJz repeats the same annoying part of VJT (where you have to fight the previous few bosses all over again), at least VJZ lets you save in between each battle.

Unfortunately, while VJ2 is polished extremely well, it just doesn't polished extremely well, it just doesn't polished director's cut of VJ1 than a full-blown sequel As neat as Silvia's Replay power is, her underwhelming fighting abilities (her guns are more a novelty than an actual fighting style) kept on making me forget that she's available, which often resulted in me being stuck in a puzzle because I'm using Joe. VJ2 is the better overall game, but it's a very rudimentary and evolutionary step rather than a revolutionary leap forward « The MAN A.

THUMBS UP Better puzzles, cooler bosses, neat new power and characters
THUMBS DOWN It feels more like an expansion than an actual sequel

Pub. Capcom Dev. Clover Studio ESRBT MSRP \$39.99

















The best thing about King of Fighters 02/03 isn't the fact that it contains both King of Fighters 2002 and 2003, but rather that these two games can offer noticeably different fighting experiences. King of Fighters 2002 represents more of the old-school style of the series with team matches that let you switch around characters before the start of each fight. Meanwhile, KOF 2003 uses a tag system similar to that of Capcom's Vs. games, letting you switch in characters on the fly-well, almost on the fly, since there's

characters switch. Normally, you might think it's a minimal difference, but it actually changes the flow of KOF gameplay for the better if you're a fan of Capcom's 2D fighting games. Fights are generally much quicker, and moves are a little easier to execute. By contrast, KOF

time for your opponent to hit you before the



2002 is a little slower and requires more precision to pull of some of the more compl cated moves and combinations. Actually, the controls in 2002 are horrible by comparison. Even the simplest moves (even those using the basic fireball motion) are inexplicably hard to pull off. You may not notice at first, but just go back and forth between the two games a few times and the differences will jump right out at you.

Despite the updated 3D backgrounds and usual assortment of extras, both games look and sound a bit dated in comparison to other 2D fighters, and if you already own KOF 2000 and 2001, then it makes the package even less enticing. Still, in the grand scheme of fighting games, KOF 2002 and 2003 offer more of what SNK's flagship fighting series is known for, so if you're already a fan, this should be a rental at the very least. If nothing else, it beats spending around \$200 to \$300 on a NeoGeo cartridge the size of a small rodent a G

Two games in one package, tag system is fun Both games are pretty dated, controls in

2002 are stiff T Worthwhile for the hardcore crowd

SNK Playmore Gev. SNK Playmore ESR& T MSRP \$39.99





A BIT OF HISTORY

Dear Capcom

I like 2D fighters, as do many other people. and for years, fans have enjoyed your 2D fight ing games in particular. Even when some of your franchises seemed to be milked bone dry, you came up with a new gimmick to make them interesting, whether it was tag-style matches new countering systems, or amazing animation

But you did nothing for Capcom Fighting Evolution except create a horrible roster of characters. If you don't think that's the case, I pres ent the characters from Red Star, a fighting game that wasn't really good (or at least good enough to warrant this sort of attention) to begin with. For that reason, I can understand why you chose these characters. Most neonle avoided Red Star, so the characters actually seem brand new to most-kind of like NBC's "If you haven't seen it, it's new to you" thing

As bad as the roster is, the game itself is fine.

and by fine I mean you couldn't have possibly made it more boring. The Street Fighter charac ters, especially Ryu, are essentially overpowered in this game because their combinations and timing are much more precise than those of most of the other members of the cast. Additionally, there really isn't any significant new gameplay element aside from the ability to manually select characters midround. It's just a complete mess, and you missed an excellent opportunity to capitalize on a great concept

Your former customer, «

You know in seconds that it's bad Some sprites are so very old, unbaled gameplay, horrible roster

Capcom Dev. Capcom ESRB T MSRP \$29.99





Capcom tried to deviate from the traditional Mega Man formula in Mega Man X7 by intro-PlayStation ducing some new 3D elements that hadn't been part of the series outside of Legends and other side stories. That idea didn't work too well, so it comes as somewhat of a surprise that X8 inher ited some bad traits in the form of lame third PLAY IT! person shooter-type levels that look and play as if they were generated by the Super Nintendo's awesome Mode 7 scaling effects. These levels just aren't all that interesting since you're confined to a rail that speeds you through them.

> But not all of the ideas from Mega Man X7 that made the jump to X8 are bad. The tag-team system (which lets you select two characters per level and switch them on the fly) returns and actually works quite well. You'll find that there are optimal combinations of the three characters-X, Zero, and Axl-depending on the level One level may be designed primarily for X and

Zero while another might be easier to beat with Zero and Axl Part of the fun is discovering which due works best. Still, even if you have the tiest team, a lot of the levels are quite difficult and rely more on trial and error than skill, which can be insanely frustrating at times

There's definitely more emphasis placed on the side scrolling action that made older Mega-Man games popular, so fans will dig it. And while the whole trial-and-error mechanic is enough to make you throw your controller down and never return, there's a rewarding feeling when you do finally win. (( ...

CT Another Mega Man game for the fans, but not really for anyone else.

Capcom Dev. Capcom ESRB E MSRP \$39.99





It sometimes seems that Working Designs is the corporate embodiment of that poster with the cat hanging by its claws from the tree branch—has it really been three years now since the company released anything? But every time it gets around to putting out another title, like Growlanser Generations, you're given cause to hope it keeps on, well, keeping on for a bit longer.

Growlanser's visuals might not be the greatset attractor, but the great strategy RPGs haven't changed their 2D look in a while, and Growlanser fits right into the post-Phantom Brave landscape. The comparison is apt in other ways: Growlanser II and III are also games that do away with the isometric grid that's characterred the genre for years, though in a completely different way than Phantom Brave has. The Growlanser titles take more of a real-time strategy approach than a turn-based one

That constant activity is one of the series'

greatest strengths since it allows objectives and plans to change as battlefield conditions shift More than most strategy games, the *Growlanser* games make you feel that what goes on in the skirmishes is the plot, rather than something that happens between the story sections.

Two games at 60 hours each means there's a lot of story to work through—especially if you intend to see every one of the multiple endings for both titles. If you don't mind a plain look and don't have much money, GG can keep you busy for a good long time—maybe even till the next Working Designs game (\* \ \cdot \ \cdot \ \cdot \).

VERDICT: A solid pair of strategy games that is monetarily afficient, if a bit plain looks-wise Pub. Working Designs Dev. Career Soft ESRS T MSRP \$49.59 22TING



The third annual Budokai game could have phoned in a few extre characters and back grounds and, let's face it, the thing still would have sold like crazy thanks to the license. Fortunately, the creators were a bit more ambitious than that, and Budokai 3 comes to us as a feature-packed, streamlined version of the formula.

Pretty much every aspect of the series has evolved: The hand to hand combat is flashier and has a new countermove to add variety, the Dragon universe story mode puts the pacing in the player's hands and lets you fly around freely and uncover special items, you can customize your character with the items you find or trade them with your friends, and you can build up your character's attributes as you go exploring.

But like previous *Budokai* games, *Budokai* 3 still has the problem of limited player movement. You don't have much control over where your character moves for most of the round.

Without a jump button or an easy way to move around freely, you're often stuck with less free dom than a character in a 2D fighter has, and considering this is *Dragon Ball*—where characters regularly fly around and move quickly in every direction—there should be even more freedom than a typical 3D fighter offers.

Still, Budokai 3 is a really good version of Budokai, and it is the kind of game Dragon Ball fans can enjoy without feeling guilty. There's actually a good game here when you take away the license, which is more than we could say for the previous games in the series. (\* "For the previous games in the series.")

VERDICT: It's the best and most evolved version of a *Budokai* game

ch. Atari Dev Dimps ESRBT MSRP \$49.99



HISTORY LESSON

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SCALER SURPRISINGLY NOT A PIECE OF CRAP

Scaler was announced at E3 in 2003 and was touted as the game that would asve TDK. Mediactive; in fact, TDK exacs were heard bragging that this game would dominate over popular platformers such as Jak and Ratchet. That proved inaccurate on at least one count—TDK's game division was bought out by Take-Two Interactive in September of 2003 and the rights for Scaler were picked up by Global Star.

So will Sceler knock Ratcher or Jak from atop the platforming throne? Well, no. But considering that it showed up at our office unannounced and after its on-sale date, it's surprisingly good—certainty much better than anyone expected.

The plot revolves around some intergalactic conspiracy involving lizerds and evil aliens and other planets; it's definitely the weakest part of the game, but who really plays platformers for the engaging plot?



There's nothing new or innovative here, but the nice level design and good movement mechanics mean that you won't be dealing with the annoying pitfalls that many similar games introduce.

One perticularly good feature is that you must unlock after egos and transform into them to help you get past specific puzzles on individual levels. The transformation back and forth from the alter ego to the main character is smooth, and it adds a nice bit of variety to the gameplay. And the diverse levels really show off the game's excellent graphics.

You've seen most of this stuff in at least a dozen other games, but the whole package is well put together and surprisingly enjoyable. Of course, knowing that it costs a mere 20 bucks only helpe compound the enjoyment. & Dana Jongewsard

PROS Great graphics, good mechanics, welldesigned levels CONS Weak story, nothing new here

Pub. Global Star Day. AZM ESRII E MSRP \$19.99





Acclaim's ATV Quad Power Racing 2 offered a nicely arcadey-and surprisingly polished-counterpoint to Sony's ATV Offroad Fury series. With its outrageously unbelievable courses and antisocial kick-and-punch mechanic, it was a refreshing alternative to the more realistic Offroad Fury.

Yes, I have a point. See, now that Rainbow-the studio behind the first two Offroad Fury titles—is owned by THQ, the Offroad Fury series has been taken over by Climax, the developer of Quad Power Racing. The product of this union, ATV Offroad Fury 3, is a somewhat schizophrenic melding of the two styles: Rainbow's similke structure and reasonably realistic track design has been combined with Climax's unrealistic ATV handling and somewhat imprecise trick system. The result is that the game doesn't excel in many areas, and while the track design and basic game setup will be familiar to Offroad Fury fans, the handling will just feel wrongto the point of curse-out-loud frustration.

That's not to say the game is a disappointment, though. Climax has drastically improved the incredibly strict way the series handled both colliding with obstacles and going offtrack, for example. The new studio has busted out some pretty impressive graphical tricks, too; lighting and weather effects are particularly amazing (even though they seem to cause a bit of slowdown here and there). And the game is awfully similar to the previous entries in the series-it'll be close enough for most casual fans, and perfectly adequate for newcomers. It just lacks that hyperrealistic polish of the earlier games

Online, though, is where Climax redeems itself: Taking an obvious cue from Xbox Live, the online mode is seriously userfriendly, providing tons of community-building tools-the polar opposite of Offroad Fury Z's laughable online attempt. You can even log in to the Offroad Fury servers while playing in single player to allow your scores to be posted online and your buddles to contact you. Every online PS2 game should be set up this way. « Joe R

ROS Nice graphics, familiar track design and structure, solid replay value, excellent online TEURS Odd physics, boring track design ACK Sucks except for the deliciously weird Coheed and Cambria and Less Than Jake's rawkin' cover of "Surrender"

Sony CEA Dev. Climax ESRB E MSRP \$39.99







It's not a particularly good sign when the best thing you can say about a golf game is that the announcer is funny, "What?" you ask, "What about the realistically bouncy CG boobies?"

Let me tell you, sitting through load screens just to watch your golfer walk around in a circle to celebrate isn't my idea of a good time-no matter how scantily clad your character is. Watching your opponents think for 30 seconds before taking a shot is not my idea of entertain ment-no matter how realistically they jiggle when they finally swing (especially considering that when they do finally get it in gear, they tend to act like clumsily lobotomized chimps for example, shooting again and again directly at a tree). And there aren't enough breasts in the world to save OG2's pathetic putting system; tak ing a wild guess and then getting three chances to see if you're right? Er, no thanks

Did I mention the shooting interface itself?

Picture the annoying timing of the triple-tap Hot Shots model combined with the occasional imprecision of the analog Tiger model, and you'll have some idea of what we're talking about here: It's the worst of all possible worlds!

All that said, there are a few interesting features here. The composure meter is something that should have been put into golf games years ago And the Outlaw Range, a series of minigames that you can use to pump up your stats, is diverting. But most of the stuff in between is so terrible that it's not remotely worth the effort ( , B) ( , x

Character models are fairly...um...lifelike VS The gameplay is pure ass ub. Global Star Dev. Hypnotic ESRB M MSRP \$19.99 0000





#### THE GREAT ONE BACKS SONY'S NHL REDUX

PLAY IT! WATCH IT!

PlavStation

It's a shame that Sony's revisionist hockey effort is met by a lockout that's keeping Canada's national sport on ice. The comeback is worthy of note: It's slick looking, slick playing, and at first glance, it rivals the competition

My favorite addition is a shot-aiming mecha nism that's simple to use and gives instant feed back on where your shot will go. Plus, when the skaters skate, it feels right even when they stop on a dime, they don't just stop. I welcome the realism

Still, the game has issues. While the visuals are better, the A I. has some problems. For one, the defense does a lot of standing around. If an offensive player doesn't enter the defender's "zone"—even on a breakaway-style opportunity-the defender will just stand, turn, and watch. For two, players are very slow to turn up the ice, generally waiting for the puck instead of receiving it in stride

While the shot aiming is smart, the shooting meter is funky-you have to use timing to ensure the biggest blast. It makes sense, but it takes too much practice before you'll fire the puck on net. The timing takes away too many scoring ops at the wrong time

Even with the flaws, this upstart definitely shows promise. But out of the gate, the game. needs time to define itself. Where ESPN NHL 2K5 focuses on realism and NHL 2005 focuses on speed, this one fits somewhere, less identifiably, in the middle (( 7

Aiming is simple, skating feels good CONS Passing is too deliberate, defense stands around too much, commentary lags

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Page 44 Studios ESRB E MSRP \$39.99





# PRINCE OF PERSIA:

I will freely admit that I had high expectations for the sequel to *OPM's* 2003 Game of the Year—perhaps unrealistically high. But *The Sands of Time* isn't just one of my favorite games of last year, it is one of my favorite games, period. Simple controls applied to sometimes-maddening physical puzzles in environments that are true works of art—these are the makings of a masterpiece in my book. It's the game I pick up when I start getting frustrated by the mediocre games that come across my desk to remind myself of how great things really can be

So, forgive me if I expected a bit too much from Warrior Within. To be fair, I certainly can't help but admire the fact that the developers weren't content to rest on their laurels and just dish out another batch of levels And I do appreciate the guts it took to give such a fine game such a serious overfaul. I'm just not entirely happy with the result.

Don't get me wrong; there are many ways in which Warrior Within out strips its predecessor—length, for example, and its cousin, difficulty: War ror will easily take you twice as long to get through as Sands' too-short eight to 10 hours. And along the way, you'll find a great deal more var

ety in combat, from a much broader repertoire of combative moves to a dramatic increase in enemy toughness. If you're expecting to plow through the game by mashing on the Square button for eight hours, you're in for a surprise: You won't get far in the game before you run into enemies who simply cannot be defeated by your basic triple-tap combo. You're going to have to dig deep into the Prince's new bag of nasty tricks if you want to get more than halfway through the game.

I like this I'm all for adding a bit of depth to Sando' admittedly shallow (though still visually spectacular) combat system. Sure, I could have done without the decapitations, disembowelments, and various slicings-in-half, but—eh. I can take it or leave it; it's not a big deal.

You'll also run into a phenomenon that was almost completely absent from the first game: boss battles. Now, here's the thing about the boss battles. They do serve to break up the occasional monotony of the run-of-the-mill encounters, but they're also fairly monotonous in themselves Here's a quick Boss Battles for Dummies, completely free of charge: 1) Move toward boss. 2) Hit X to jump over him/her/ft. 3) Hit Square twice to





NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

The introduction of large-scale time travel didn't turn out to be quite as the result of the time travel didn't turn out to be quite as historication. Spends the green traveling between the present and a couple blundred years in the past through greet portalls; he does n't actually centrol this shift. Moreover, the "go into the past the change the future" idde is weetfally underuised: Maybe next time....

## WARRIOR WITHIN

slash as you're coming down. 4) Repeat until one of you is dead rusually the boss? This works for four of the nine or 10 boss battles (including the two with what's-ner-name, Lady No-Pants, whom you fight in all her Brarian waxed glory in this month's demo! At least three (maybe four—they all sort of ran together after a while of the other battles are against Really Big Guy (also in the demo!, and all of these encounters work the same wax. Hamstring him, climb up in b back, and whack him on the head

That leaves only two really unique boss battles, and neither of them is terribly inspiring; they all felt like distractions from the runny jumpy climby acrobatics that make the series so fantastic. The overwheiming impression I got was that this was the designers' first attempt at boss bat tiles. I have no idea if that's accurate I'm, sust saying that's what it felt like.

This sense of less-than-pristine polish extends elsewhere in the game, too, Take the story, for example, Far from the well written and fairly surprising story of Sands, Warnor's story is poorly scripted, needlessly complex, and ultimately not terribly satisfying. The setup feels somewhat arbitrary, the big twist is fairly transparently foreshacowed, and the over

interest—well, the moment I realized she was *supposed* to be a love interest, I laughed out foud because the exchange is so clumsy and out of place. It's the polar opposite of the smart, clever interplay between the Prince and Farah in *Sands of Time* 

But maybe that was intentional; maybe the designers meant to portray

#### "I AM THE PRINCE OF PERSIA, AND THE KING OF BLADES!" ER...NO.

the Prince as a bit of a heel in keeping with his new tough-guy image If so, it's as unpleasant as most of the attempts to forcibly inject machismo into the game. I really could have done without the Prince's one-liner bat the cress, for example: "I am the Prince of Persia, and the King of Blades' "Face the Prince, pay the price!" "Do you see the light?!" Er ...no. And



#### EXTENDED CUI THIS OLD PRINCE LEARNS NEW KILLS













BOSSED AROUND he gryphon at left was pean't really seem to dd much to the chimi

you know that laughable death-metalloid racket that kicks in about halfway through the first level in the demo? That's not placeholder-that's actually in the game. All over the game, in fact, I wish I could have been there for that meeting: "You know what a game based in ancient Persia really needs? Those electric guitars the kids love!"

earning the Ropes: The Prince can now climb, swing

on, and attack from ropes hanging off walls, augme

his wall-run maneuver.

But you know what? In spite of these (in my opinion, misguided) attempts to graft a kind of hipness onto the game, Warrior Within still rocks. The story may be clumsy, but it's still light-years more interesting than the plots of most of the adventure and/or platforming fare available. The boss battles may be poorly executed, but they're still interesting enough to deliver at least a taste of the sense of wonder that Sands made us expect And there may be a handful of moments when the level design feels a bit awkward, or the puzzles feel a bit too familiar, or the writing sounds stifted and forced-but name me one other game in which it's such a joy just to move your character around, just to run him through his paces

In the end, it's the similarities to The Sands of Time that pull Warrior Within away from the threat of major disappointment. It's running, jumping, flipping, and balancing. .and then rewinding to do it all again. It's walking into a room with no idea how you're going to get from point A to point B and then figuring it out through the use of your wits (or failing that, delicious trial and error). It's gaping at gorgeous renderings of crumbling castles, lush gardens, and vertiginous heights

#### YOU WON'T MISTAKE THIS FOR ANYTHING BUT PRINCE OF PERSIA.

Ultimately, although Warrior Within lacks Sands of Time's clean simplicity and polish, it's enough like its predecessor that fans won't have too much to complain about. You may be as annoyed by the new direction as I am, or you may think it is a brilliant move. But you're not going to mis take this for anything but Prince of Persia ( ... Rip x









#### PLAY IT YOURSELF STEP BY STEP THROUGH THIS MONTH'S DEMO

The first half of the demo is the first scene in the game. For most of it. all you need to do is follow the onscreen instructions. Work your way to the back of the boat and you'll eventually come up against Janie Pantsiess, who will try her hardest to separate your head from your neck. The best approach is to hit & while moving toward her to jump over her, press O, O to slash on the way down, and repeat. If the camera suddenly jumps to a close-up, jam on O to push her back.

The second half of the demo comes from a segment much later in the game. Go down the ladder and fight three enemies. You won't have a second weapon at this point, so why not try a weapon-stealing maneuver? Hit @, @ to get behind an enemy, then keep hitting @ until he gives up the goods. Once you've beaten them all, run through the rotating blades and into the next room.

Here, grab the rotating lever and turn it one half-circle. You should still have your second weapon, so try a few button combinations on the new enemies to see what you come up with. One of our favorites is @, @, O, O, @, @-spectacular! Then run up the wall in the righthand room to flip the switch and go through the door that opens.

More enemies in this room; try hitting @ or O near the pillar to pull off some spin attacks. Once you've finished with them, refresh yourself at the fountain, then head to the left and climb onto the ledge on your right. Jump toward the opposite wall and keep jumping until you're at the level above.

Head in and grab your new sword-and meet your new friend! Yes, it's Monsieur le Grand, and you probably already know how to beat him by now: Whack at the backs of his legs until he goes down on one knee. Then climb up his back and whack at his head until he starts reaching for you. Avoid his arms if possible by leaning to the opposite side, then resume the whacking. If you're having trouble with the timing, hold L1 to rewind briefly and try it again.

Once he's defeated, you can watch the video to see what all those decapitations and disembowelments would have looked like if they hadn't been sanitized for your protection. Oh, and don't worry if you leave the game to idle; you'll have time to jump back in as long as the game-footage video is playing.















#### PLAY WITH AN ALIEN FRIEND

If there's one thing more tun than blasting through the game on your own it as blasting through it with a buddy. Seeing as the action gets more than a little crazy, you then your yellow dudes different types of hats so you can keep track of what the hell is going on.

#### GODZILLA: SAVE THE EARTH

There's one thing that Godzilla: Save the Earth does really well, and that is re-creating the utter destruction that comes as a result of a 50-foot-tall lizard fighting an equally gigantic moth. It's quite satisfying to throw an enemy into a massive skyscraper, only to see the building collapse seconds later due to the impact of one of the several mighty beasts in this game. In fact, that's why the destruction-oriented fights are easily the most entertaining of the several types of levels available in the game-somehow, playing basketball (or in this case, picking up boulders and throwing them through a rim) just doesn't measure up to the thrill of kicking a big moth in the ass.

Sadly, the combat isn't all that great, either. Granted, it's kind of hard to gauge how a giant radioactive lizard would control if one were to actually exist, but that's no



excuse for having combinations that are either ridiculously slow or don't actually happen until a second or so after you press the appropriate buttons. Additionally, throws can be a little difficult to execute simply because your character has some trouble keeping locked on to a certain opponent, which is particularly bothersome in multiplayer matches.

Still, Godzilla fans will more than likely dig some of the extras thrown into the game. For one, there are characters from just about every Godzilla film, including multiple versions of Godzilla himself and some other favorites, like Jet Jaguar, who is totally not Ultra Man. No, really. He's not Ultra Man. Also, there are extra stages as well as concept art showing a variety of different monsters from the Godzilla series. But none of this is really enough to overshadow the fact that Save the Earth is a sloppy fighting game that may be good for a few laughs and nothing more. & Giencarlo Varanini.

PROS Large cast of characters, destroying cities is fun

CONS Controls are slow and awkward in multiplayer matches
IET JAGUAR is not Ultra Man, dam it!

Pub. Atari Dev. Pipeworks Software ESHB T MSRP \$39.99

## CHARM, WIT, AND GOOD LOOKS

We've been championing Alien Hominid's transition from superpopular online browser game to PS2 übershooter for months now. Was it worth all of our breathless enthusiasm? In short, yes. Here's a game that will take you back to the good old days, when all games were 20 side-scrollers and you could get all the fun you could ever need out of just shooting stuff. Hommand melds old-school ideas from Contra, Metal Slug, and Gunstar Heroes and gives them a beautiful hand-drawn look that you can't help but smile at. The eponymous alien is such a cheeky little guy (you just know you want to go to

\$20), and more wit and Imagination seem to have been put into just one level than many games have in their entirety. It relentlessly throws chaotic and crazy new concepts at you, and assuming you have the chops to make it through, you're never staring at the same thing or more than a few moments. One minute you're controlling a giant abominable snowman as he gorges on KGB agents; the next, you're piloting a reconstructed flying saucer around FBI helicopters before dropping back to ground level and attacking a giant amorphous butter-scotch-pudding monster that pukes on you. The game revels in its own ultraviolent ridiculousness, and in doing so, it does a remarkable job

of evoking Japanese game design at its wackrest while retaining a certain Western style.

The gameplay is by no means perfect. though. It's a living hell of cheap deaths, oneshot kills and unfriendly spawn points; plus, it's ludicrously difficult on anything other than Easy mode. It'll kick your ass hard until you program your brain to remember attack patterns, but once you've attained the Zen-like meditative state needed to progress without dying every five seconds, it's incredibly rewarding. Although boasting 16 levels, it's actually quite a short game. Those of you with freakishly attuned reflexes will be able to blast through it in a few hours, but anyone over the age of 29 is going to need to take a break from the frenetic "Oh my god I can't see what's going on" action from time to time. It never stops being either stylish or fun, though, and how many games can you say that about that feature a goofy-looking yellow alien? Just one. « John Davisoi

PROS Stylish, witty, old-school fun CONS It's tough, in no small part due to the cheap deaths

Pub. 0-3 Entertainment Dev. The Behemoth ESRB T MSRP \$29.99

RATING









First there was Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends. Then came Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends. You can only imagine how xtreme the legends get with Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends! Unfortunately, if you have a realistic imagination, that's not very xtreme at all.

Whereas Dynasty 3 XL worked largely for its novelty alone and Dynasty 4 XL introduced some cool new gameplay modes, Samurai XL adds less than either. Only the most hardcore will appreciate much of anything added to this eighth Warriors release for PS2. For instance, versus mode includes three new competitive multiplayer games-which you'll never feel the need to play more than once. Survival mode introduces a gold-gathering mechanic-big deal. Meanwhile, the encyclopedia tells you more about the game's feudal-Japanese characters-a welcome addition, but nothing you'd buy a game for.

Once you get past the negligible new features, there is some fun hack-n-slash gameplay to be had with the four new characters. No single Warriors character has ever been as fun to use as Ina the archer warrior princess, and her father Tadakatsu Honda (yeah, the same dude you unlocked in Onimusha 3) is worth a test drive as the veritable Lu Bu of Japan.

But still...four characters? Dynasty 3 XL had seven to supplement a game that already had 40 warriors compared to Samurai's 15. Would it have been so hard for Koei to have added these folks the first time? & Chris Baker

REVIEW HAIKU Four new characters / Make this worth a look for fans / But for no one else

Pub Koei Day Oliniga Forcii ESRB T MSRP \$29.99



Disclosure: I'm not a fan of Gundam or any Adult Swim programming that originates in Japan. I have no giant robot fetishes, though I prew up on Transformers, Voltron, and Robotech. I actually prefer small robots, specifically ones that vacuum your floor, bring you drinks, or do impersonations of pets. I am a fighting-game fan, and I know a clunker when I see one. Battle Assault 3 is almost, not quite, a clunker, existing in the space between serviceable and irritating.

For every positive, there are a couple of negatives. Fights are fast (and not at all what you'd expect from skyscraper tanks with legs), but they don't flow. At close range, the robots dispatch a few simple combos. From afar, they squeeze off gunfire at one another. Unfortunately, you spend most of your time in between, trying to get in close for a jab or a stab, or trying to pull away to blast a few rounds. Fights never build up momentum, starting and stopping, usually ending in anticlimactic laser fire. You can rumble with up to four fighters at once, which accelerates the action But switching your focus between opponents is not as smooth as it needs to be, often leaving you pounding on a button while an untargeted foe gets in cheap shots.

Given the popularity of Gundam models, I'm quessing fans will want this for the 33 playable suits. Well, they're in here, though they don't play very differently from one another. For the hardcore, I officially stamp Battle Assault 3 "not a disaster" and "slightly funnish." « Robert Ashley

OLTPON Fast fights, four robot rumbles POWER RANGERS Fights don't flow, those Gundams play very similarly to each other iib Bandai Dev Bandai ESRB T MSRP \$39.99

#### HUH?

Although Vietcona does "Purple Haze" isn't actually one of the tracks. It does nave Bendrix's song 'He-Joe" as performed by Deep Purple though which s ub sort of close?



When I started playing Vietcong, I was pleasantly surprised. "Hey," I thought, "this is actually pretty good for a \$10 game! Then I discovered it's not a \$10 game. It's funny how much of an impact 30 dollars can have on your perception of quality.

For \$10, I'd be willing to ignore the ridiculously long load times. I'd be willing to ignore the horrendous A.I., which causes enemies to wander aimlessly and teammates to relentlessly step directly into your line of even going so far as to wedge themselves between you and the wall you're crouching behind. I'd be willing to ignore the overly sensitive controls, the exaggerated recoil that makes aiming doubly difficult, and the enemies' precise shooting that makes it clear they have none of these problems. And I'd certainly be willing to ignore the ultrasimple graphics (circa 1998), the horrendous ani-



mation, and the painfully bad sound effects All these complaints wouldn't carry nearly as much weight, which would allow the game's (admittedly few) strengths to stand out a bit. For example, consider the fact that this is a first-person shooter with truly interactive squad elements: You can issue separate commands to each of your teammates if you choose, or even walk up to them and interact with them directly-borrowing ammo, asking for health, that sort of thing. The game also has surprisingly careful pacing, which adds a certain degree of tension; running 'n' gunning will leave you stone-cold dead in a hurry, so you have to make each choice cautiously.

A \$10 price tag could make Vietcong a diverting shooter for anyone who's looking for a quick fix of period combat. It wouldn't exactly make the game fun...but at least it wouldn't be painful. As it is now, though, I can't help but grimace every time I think about someone dropping 40 bucks on this thing, « Joe Rybick

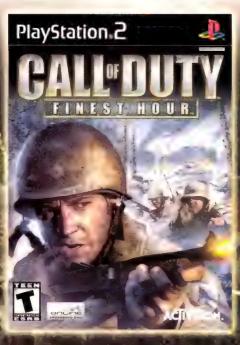
ROS True tactical control, plus online play No fun to play, watch, or listen to-oh, and good luck finding someone you can play against online

rb. Gathering Dev. Illusion Softworks ESRB M MSRP \$39.99





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## RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE

WHO KNEW THAT EVIL RESIDED IN A DVD CASE? by John Scalzi

On the grand scale of Hollywood filmmakers, there are (in descending order) icons, legends, respected artists, journeymen, hacks, total hacks, and Paul W.S. Anderson, Anderson gets his own special level in filmmaking hell because not only is he an atrocious filmmaker, having pawned off such resolute effluvia as Mortal Kombat, the first Resident Evil film, and the outrageously inane Alien vs. Predator, but he's also a moderately successful atrocious filmmaker. This means that despite the general craptasticality of his craft, people still attend his films, and thereby he's given film studios no reason not to reward him with still more chances to commit heinous acts of film production. What makes it even worse is that his most filmacially successful films are based on or somehow related to videogames—which is to say the nascent genre of videogame films is keeping this man's career alive, even if he's not returning the favor by making his videogame-injered films worth watching.

Which brings us to Resident Evil: Apocalypse, which Andersen did not diffect (a job palmed off to longitume second unit director Alexander Witt) but did produce and "write," so trust me, he's still amply responsible. The film is an inchoate mess of action and zombies, which should come as no surprise since the first film in the series was exactly the same, and given that film's modest yet still unfathomable success, there was no reason to screw with the formula. This film finds Alice (Milla Jovovich) picking up where she left off in the first film, wandering about Raccon City avoiding and/or shooting zombies; eventually she teams up with two other gals as sexy as she is to find a little girl who is the key to escaping the city before than the zombie population gets nuked. Alas, my encapsulation here is

far more sensibly arrayed than the actual film or plot, neither of which easily survives Anderson's scripting of events. Yes, it's fun to ogle Jovovich and costars Sienna Guillory and Sandrine Holt, but that's what Internet newsgroups are for.

Look, videogame movies have a problem as it is; namely, there's yet to be a genuinely good film based on a videogame. Some people would say that's because videogames don't offer much to go on plotwise, but we gamers know that's not true; we can all easily name six or seven games with great stories and plots. The problem less partly with the filmmakers, who strip-mine the games for their built-in marketability and then simply assume gamers are beef-witted consumers with their money already out. But it also lies partly with gamers, since apparently sufficient numbers of us behave exactly in that manner, thereby reducing the chance that future films based on videogames will be worth seeing. People like Paul W.S. Anderson are responsible for making videogame movies such a damn waste of time, but gamers are responsible for supporting his slacktacular work at all.

Simply put: If we don't demand better movies based on videogames, we won't get them. We'll just keep getting this, over and over again.

RÁTING LOSSES



The thing I like about the Bourne movies is that they're superefficient action films-they run clean, move fast, and have action scenes drenched in such realism that you don't have much time to think to yourself, "Hey, I bet you in real life Matt Damon is a candyass who'd cry like a baby if he got himself into a slap fight." Here he's a smart hardass trying to figure out why the people he told to leave him alone just won't. Action films do get better than this, but not without actually being great.



There's a tremendous existential pleasure in watching Tom Cruise go bad. You get a grin from the first moment he pops up here with his frosted hair and snazzy suit: it's like watching that goody-goody kid from homeroom coming into class with a hickey the size of Delaware. Here, Cruise is a hit man who dragoons a hapless taxi driver (Jamie Foxx) into driving him around to his murders: the guestion becomes whether the taxi dude's going to make it through the night. Foxx does his part and more than holds his own (this is one of the two performances that are likely to get him to the Oscars this year, the other being his star turn as Ray Charles in Rayl, but ultimately Cruise wins on points and style.

Only a star who has been the good guy as

convincingly as he does. He looks like he's

having just too much fun

long as Cruise has could flip to casual evil as

This film works a lot better if you've seen the

original 1962 version, so you can see how this

new version updates to today's world. With

that context, you'll see a sly, smart reinven

tion; without it, this film can be confusing.

with a plot involving brainwashing, the Gulf

War, and political candidates bought and sold

by the highest bidder. Even without the origi-

nal version, however, this is well worth catch-

ing for the excellent performances by Denzel

Washington, Liev Schreiber, and Meryl Streep.







#### (Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan)

This film enraged sci-fi geeks because it has almost nothing to do with the Asimov book it stole its title from. But this I. Robot is a perfectly cromulent bastardization: Will Smith is suitably Will Smith-like as a Chicago cop with a grudge against robots, who-surprise!eventually prove that Will was right not to trust them, and director Alex Provas provides lots of nicely done sci-fi action scenes. Does Asimov deserve a more faithful adaptation? Sure. But this is the one he got



#### (Clive Owen, Keira Knightley)

This ridiculous revision of the King Arthur story (Arthur is a Roman mercenary, Guinevere is the ass-kicking Queen of the Woads) purports to be based on the "true" story of Arthur, which I suppose it is, if by "true" you mean "made up in the fetid, ahistorical imagination of a screenwriter." On the other hand, this silliness does let us see a buffed-out Keira Knightly, Clive Owen makes a reasonably cool Arthur, and the action plays out like Braveheart lite, so you won't be entirely unentertained



#### DVD RELEASES

December 7, 2004 24: Season 3 The Bourne Supremacy Industrial A Day The Ultimate Matrix

December 14, 2004 The Return of the King Extended Version

December 28:2000 Candidate Variation Dynamic shaun of the Dead the Silinosons: Séason 5

December 28, 2004 Anchannour The Legend of Ron Burgundy Garden State Resident Pel







God, this is a stupid movie, and you have to understand that this is meant as a compliment. Vince Vaughn plays a slacker health club owner who is about to lose his business; Ben Stiller is the overpumped rival gym owner who has his eye on Vince's property. This flick wants nothing more than to be idiotic and make you laugh, and since it does both, it's hard to complain about it. And it makes you want to play dodgeball again, at least until you remember what being hit in the ear was like



This film has been overpraised, mostly because writer/director/star Zach Braff is known as a sitcom actor and is therefore not credited for having a brain, and because it features Natalie Portman in a film where she's not spouting George Lucas' deadly prose, thus reminding us that she can act. Give these factors their due consideration, and you've got another film in which a schmoe (Braff) goes home to guirky friends and family arguments and discovers it's nice to be liked by a nice girl (Portman). Well, yeah.



#### el Travis, Blanchard Ryan)

Also known as "The Blair Shark Project," this little indie movie is a character study of two yuppies accidentally left at sea by their tour boat-and then the sharks come. What gives this film an extra thrill is that it was actually shot on open water, and the sharks you see in the film are real. Yeeek Does it make for an excellent film? Well, no, but you have to give credit to the stars (and the film crew) for being insane enough to use live killing machines as a chean special effect.













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# SAN ANDREAS

#### OLTOOL UP EARLY

Take the path that runs along the right-hand side of Sweet's house. There are two bridges behind it. Under the one to your right, you'll find a micro SMG, and under the bridge to your left, you'll find some body armor.

#### 02 WEAR A LOT OF GREEN

To build respect early in the game (especially during the first six or seven hours), mele sure you wear your gang's colors. If you're not wearing green, it'll be difficult for you to build trust with the other gang members. Early on, your colors are more important than your sex appeal, so buy a green shirt and maybe a hat.

#### HTLASH : ANIMATE ED

Ride a bicycle or run as much as you can early in the game. Your stamina and your health are linked, so the fitter you become, the bigger your health bar will be. This process starts very early on and grows rapidly over the first 10 hours of gameplay. To make your health bar grow more quickly, hit the stationary bike at the gym.

#### D4 GRAB A TAXI

The first thing to do any time you encounter a new area is anneg a texted (or a first ruck or an ambulance) and complete some optional missions. This is a great way to build up cash in a hurry and learn the lay of the land. Later in the game, you'll encounter trucker missions, which you should take immediately—they are incredibly lucrative, and they provide a methodical approach to learning the best routes through the San Andress countryside.

#### D5 MARK A WAYPOINT

Use the waypoint tag on the map by hitting the Circle button to mark a location. This is a useful way to mark a turning point on a long journey (especially helpful out in the country) or mark the gym or a favorite store.

#### 06 FLY THE FORBIDDEN SKIES

You're not supposed to be able to fly around San. Andreas until you've gone through the paces and earned a pilot's license. In fact, if you go into Easter Bay International Airport outside San Fierro, you'll find that the planes are locked up tight. But you can actually take to the skies before you complete your first mission—head down to Los Santos International and look for the section of exterior wall without chain-link fencing. If you park a car in front of the wall and hop on the hood, you can use CJ's handy climbing skills to scramble over the top of it and then jack a Dodo ... or a speedy Shamal. If you fly out of Los Santos airapace, expect the heat to come down on you with four-star fury and put a quick end to your aerial escapades. But the Shamal is fast enough to get you to Las Venturas to do some gambling before the long arm of the law. puts you in a choke hold.

#### D7 INVESTMENT OF A LIFETIME

it's entirely likely that nothing in the entire game

is as annoying as losing a race and being forced to return all the way to the start. Save yourself the hassle by buying property near the starting point of a race so you can save and immediately reload if you screw up too badly. Ten thousand imaginary dollars is a small price to pay for the comfort of not having to drive halfway across the state. The good news is that there's already a convenient save point for one of the races: Simply save the game at the cabin in Fern Ridge that belongs to Cesar's cousin—It's a short drive to your goal from there.

#### **08 BEEFCAKE**

There are at least six women in San Andreas looking for love, but don't think you can just walk up to them and sweep them off their feet; these ladies are picky. Denise you meet as a matter of course, thanks to that bastard Tenpenny. The rest you'll have to meet on your own in out-of-the-way places...and to win their hearts, you'll need to meet their distinctive physical tastes. The lady at the San Fierro drivers' school only digs fatties, while the girl at Ammo-nation in Blueberry has a thing for "average" guys. If you want to be a true player, you'll have to woo them all. Our advice is to go for the Las Venturas lady who's into muscular guys last-it's easy to conform to most other tastes, but muscle mass is harder to get rid of than fat.

#### 09 MAKE FLYING EASIER

To make flying planes easier, switch the camerato the first-person view. This is particularly handy when piloting the more sensitive aircraft, like the WWII fighters and the biplanes. Private jets and helicopters are a little easier to control, but the old stuff is much more sensitive to the game's physics engine. Also, remember to be subtle. Don't fumble with the stick if you need to adjust only a little. More often than not, a light touch on the rudder (L2 and R2) is all you need to correct your route.

#### 10 CHASE ME

Chase missions are tough. Whether you're gathering police bikes for the Caligula's Palace job or tracking couriers for Zero, they're all hard missions. What's the key? Use the map. You're not going to beat these missions just by tracking the dots on the radar—you need to keep flipping to the map to track the route of each target. For the police bike mission in particular, you also need to remember that the truck runs around the perimeter of Las Venturas clockwise, so if you're on the opposite side of town, move along the on the opposite side of town, move along the

#### 11 TRY PARACHUTING EARLY Technically speaking, CJ isn't supposed to be

able to go parachuting through the skies of San Andreas until he has a pilot's license. But what kind of goon thinks GTA games are about playing by the rules? As usual, Rockstar has slipped a back door into the game for those who care to hunt it down, which means that you can do base jumping right from the beginning. Head to downtown Los Santos and look for a tall building with a circular design (it's just southwest of
the Mulholland Intersection). Enter where you
see a yellow marker to climb to the roof, where a
prachute will be weiting for you. Now, take a
flying jump...just don't forget to pull the rip cord
before it's too late. There's also a perachute stop
the big pyramid skyscraper across from the hotel
where you can run valet missions in San Fierro.
The entrance ian't marked, but you can still reach
the roof by ducking in the door.

#### 12 AIM MANUALLY

Head shots are invariably instant kills, but you can't do them if you rely on the autotargeting system. If you can, aim manually.

#### 13 TURF WARS MADE EASY

Even though the first salvo of your turf war is: launched in the park to the northwest of Los Santos, the best place to begin your offensive in earnest is on the beaches to the south and around Grove Street. The Ballas there are a bunch of softies, frequently walking around unarmed or with puny baseball bats and pistols. The gangs near the docks to the north are quite a bit tougher, generally equipped with SMGs and assault rifles. And don't even think about taking over any yellow areas until you've got a substantial entourage—the Mexican Vagos gang members who control the city's eastern portions are bad dudes. Jumping into the war at your first opportunity has two positive effects. First, it'll very quickly help you attain a hitman rating with a number of weapons, and second, it will save you some time when you finally get to the final few hours of the entire game.

#### 14 GANG WAR PICK-UPS

Health and body armor pick-ups appear randomly between each gang-war wave, usually at the perimeter of the war zone but generally not too far from C.I. Once you spot the pick-ups, try to plan your strategy around easy access to them in case things start to go downhill for you. Whatever you do, avoid letting the pick-ups become surrounded by foes.

#### 15 LET THEM COME TO YOU

If you go charging into a war zone and let yourself get surrounded, you're screwed. The best way to win is to let the bad guys come to you. You'll probably notice that gang-war enemies always appear in three waves and that each wave consists of two groups that appear from two different locations, usually on opposite sides of CJ. Your best bet is to move to the perimeter of the active war zone between waves and run to the center once the new batch of baddies appears, staying perpendicular to them. This will force them to come to you, which they'll obligingly do in single-file fashion. Then it's just a matter of crouching in place, preferably with a bit of cover, and picking them off one at a time. The submachine gun is the ideal tool for this. It has a great lock-on range, powerful shots, and a formidable rate of fire.



Right, Up, Left, Down.

Down, Down





## DING SAN ANDREAS



"My knowledge of the game in its entirety is no longer what it once was," muses Dan Houser, Rockstar's creative director. "No one person can possibly know everything there is to know about the game while you're piecing it together because there's just so much of it. I think I have a handle on most of it, but we divided the team into units that looked after things like races, the overall world, character development, and things like that." So, just how big is the team? "There were about 75 guys in Scotland," Houser says, "but it didn't really start off that big. Some of the guys were working on other stuff, like Manhunt, but by the end, yes, there were about 75 there, and then another 15 or so of us in New York. Then, of course, there were all the testers. It all used to be much smaller, you know."

Actually, we had an enormous number of testers working on this game," he beams. "There were something like 60, 80, and later 100 guye. checking and balancing the game to make it work."



Now that it's done, Houser ponders what the San Andreas team's biggest achievement was. "For me, I think the stuff that we worked the hardest on was the stuff that you don't necessarily notice. I know that sounds silly, but it's true. It's about the breadth and the depth. It's not just the size of the world, it's not just that it takes so long to get from one side to the other, it's also that you can walk up to a soda machine and get a drink out of it, no matter where you see one. We worked really hard on things like the pedestrians speaking to one another. In the previous games, you could run around and there would be all these people around, but there wasn't much going on. This time around, you can just sit back and watch all the freaks interact with each other. Occasionally, you'll see that they just don't like each other and they'll even start to fight. We're still scratching the surface of every pedestrian having a 'life' in a virtual world. rather than just having them cruise around a gameplay environment.

Last month, when we asked Dan's brother, Rockstar President Sam Houser, about the future of the franchise, he responded, "If we didn't have to top it, what would be the point?" before going on to concede that, "This is the trilogy for now, and we're not in a rush to do the next one." Is everyone in agreement on that? "That's what he said, is it?" Dan Houser asks. "Well, when we started GTA3, the first year was spent just making the city work, and only then did we set about making the story. It was around that point that we really got an inkling of what this meant for us in the bigger

sense and we started to think about the future. We already had some ideas penciled in for Vice, and then in even fainter pencil I think we knew where we had to end up with San Andreas. We knew where we wanted the story to go, and we wanted the whole thing to be a very loosely bonded trilogy. It had to be three different interconnected stories. We didn't want some sort of ultimate bad guy, and any crossover between the games had to be stuff that made sense. We didn't want references to previous games to scare anyone off with San Andreas. I love the Claude and Catalina scene and the fact that Catalina has such a significant part in the new game. We had some fun with the way we developed her character, but the reason we chose her was because she was the perfect fit for those scenes in the Badlands. I think it turned out well having her be sort of a sympathetic character in San Andreas after seeing her as the ultimate bad guy in GTA3."

Catalina is a good example of how the team's approach to humor dif-

## "WE WANTED THE WHOLE THING TO

fered throughout the trilogy. Look back at GTA3 now, and it's nowhere near as a rich an experience as San Andreas is in terms of character interior action or script. "A lot of that conservatism is because Claude didn't speak," Houser concedes. "It's difficult to make things funny when your hero is mute and you have all of the supporting characters just jabbering away. It wasn't just the voices, either-we've made some advances with the motion capture in the game, too; it's much more refined now

"If you look back at GTA3 and Vice City and think about the most cine matic moments, they were missions like those in Vice where you're in the helicopter chatting with Lance that really had that movie feel to them. Everyone on the team wanted to take that stuff and expand on it, and you'll notice in San Andreas that there's a lot more of that kind of thing. # you play some of the set pieces, like the car chases in the Los Santos scenes, you'll notice that they say different stuff to one another. Also, some of the missions where it's just Carl and Cesar, you'll hear them say all kinds of stuff to each other." With all of that chat, how much time was spent on the recording sessions? "I was pretty much locked in a studio for five months," Houser groans. "It was definitely worth it, though, don't you think? Now that it's done, I think it's clear that one of our limitations is the media itself. We were really fighting what you can squeeze onto a DVD. In fact, for the whole game, we were definitely using all of the power of the PS2. We're right up against the edge of what it's capable of." 40

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HORST GAME EVER? For a while we thought Catwoman was going to be the biggest gaming atrocity of the year, but that same month (Issue #84) we were shocked to see an even worse game, McFarlane's Evil Prophecy from Konami. It has the honor of being one of our lowest scoring games ever!

## EXTRACTION POINT X **CTRACTION POINT** TERRURIETS START You're holding in your hands the second of This rooftop vantage point is particularly OPM's three exclusive new SOCOM II mans. useful for terrorists-it provides a good field of packed lovingly onto the demo disc in the midview down the main road (especially helpful if dle of the magazine. But before you hop online with this all-new escort level, we thought we'd you've blocked off many of the alternate paths) and allows you to effectively lob grenades down ground incursions. share with you some general tips to help make the neighboring alleyways. You can also get a your experience just a little bit brighter. scoped view of anyone hiding out on 5 1 This is a door. It opens and shuts via a 5 This broad rooftop isn't as useful as it may

switch on the terrorists' side. It's a strong metal door; it can't be blown up or forced open. This makes it perhaps the most important point on the entire map. You see, this door effectively blocks the quickest path from the SEALs' insertion point to the closer of the two extraction points. If the SEALs get there first with VIPs in tow, they stand a good chance of making it to the extraction point just around the corner. If the terrorists get there first to close the door-or, say, mine it-they will force the SEALs to escort the VIPs by a much more visible route. You'll find other doors at and at that also aid in restricting the SEALs to the main road, but neither door is as effective as this one.

seem. Sure, SEALs can snipe any terrorist hiding out at the extraction point at the end of the road, but not without coming out into the open to do it. No, about the only thing this place is good for is a very obvious diversion. Now, the box-strewn warehouse underneath-that's a different story.

6 This suite of rooms overlooking the SEALs' start point would be a great place for terrorists to rush to if they suspect that the SEALs haven't moved the VIPs. It has two entrances. neither of which is visible from the SEALs' start point, and it can be reasonably well defended. Alternately, it can serve as a spot for SEALs to

stash the last remaining VIP if the other two are killed off; it's one of the few places on the SEALs' side of the map that can be decently protected against snipers, grenade attacks, and

X SEALS START

7 Just off these rooms is a stairway with a broken railing, which allows enterprising campers to position themselves below the stairs, offering a well-hidden view of anyone coming down from above. Not terribly useful, to be sure, but it could be the difference in a heated match.

8 Finally, in a surprising contrast to the last map, After Hours, Liberation sports very little in the way of out-of-the way sniper spots. In fact, the only "secret" snipe point we could find was this paltry tent in the back of the balconied marketplace. If you jump carefully onto the low stack of boxes in front of it and then to the higher stack, you can leap onto the tent, climb around to the back, and lay prone without being seen from below. Yav. «

GAME	PLIBLISHER !	OCORE IS	ME
F1 Career Challenge	EA Sports	•••••	71
F1 Championship		••••	4
F1 Championship Season 2000		001	41
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel		001	76
Fantavision	DON'S DELL	••••	40
Fatal Frame		****	55
Fatal Frame 2 Crimson Butterfly	1501115	••••	77
Ferrar: F355 Chailenge	oogu	••	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer		00001	34
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	*****	51
FIFA Soccer 2003	EA Sports	*****	63
FIFA Soccer 2004 FIFA Soccer 2005		•••••	75 86
	EA Sports Vivendi Univers	94	80
Fight Club Fight Night 2004	EA Sports		100
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Final Fantusy X	Square EA		53
	Square Enix USA	*****	75
	Square Enix USA	****	78
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Finding Nemao	THO	0001	71
Fireblade	Midway	.01	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami		67
Ford Racing 2			76
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	<b>#1</b>	51
Forgotten Realms Damon Stone			8-
Enrmula One 2001	Sony CEA		50
Freaky Fiyers	M dway	0001	73
Freedom Fighters	EA Games	*****	73
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estyre Metal X	Midway	•••	1
Frequency	Sony CEA	0001	50
Frogger The Great Quest	Konami	001	53
Finggers Adventure. The Rescue Front Mission 4	Square Enix		82
f give Hunter	Encare		76
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Galerians Ash	Sammy	44	66
Ga lop Racer	Tecmo		48
Gal op Racer 2003 A New Breed	Tecmo		65
Ga op Racer 2004	Tecmo	****	81
Gaunt et Dark Legacy	M dway		4+
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Get on da Mic	Eidos		8
Ghosthunter	Namco		84
Ghost in the Shell Stand Alone C			8
Giants Citizen Kabuto	Interplay		5
G targo-Man	Koe.		5
Gladiator Sword of Vengeance	Acc aim		75
Gladius	LucasArts	****	73
Goblin Commander Unleash the	Horde Jaieco 300		76
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Gradius V	Konam	0001	3
Gran Turismu 3: A spes	Snny CEA	****	44
Grand Prix Chailenge	Atar		
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas		*****	8
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockster	****	63
Grand Their Annu III	Rockstar	****	5
, and a ()	Ubisoft	****	5
Grand a Xtreme	Enix		63
Gravity Games Bike Street, Vert,			6
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	****	7:
GTC Africa	Majesco		5
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy		8
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	****	5
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	••••	61
Gungrave	Sega		6
Gungrave Overdose	Mast ff	9991	8
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The Guy Game	Gather-ng	•	8
Half-Life	Sierra	*****	5
Harry Petter: Quidditch World C	up EA Games	444	7

**IGHTERS** 

ike the gang wars in

Grand Theft Auto San

Andreas? You should

dig through a bargain bin at your local game store and see if you can find a copy of lo Inter-

active's (the Hitman

guys) Freedom Fighters

It's a bit like SOCOM

with gangs, and it's

awesome

SAME	PLOUGHER	DOM: N	3/E	GAME	PARAM	9000
sarry Potter and the Sorcerer's Ston	e EA Games	•1		that Skies 1	Sammy	
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James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	EA Games		52	Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty		
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# KILLZONE MULTIP WEAPONS AND WEAPON PLACEMENT ON TWO OF OUR FAVORITE ONLINE MAPS

#### SOUTHERN HILLS

#### USING STRUCTURES AS SHELTER

The symmetry of this level works well for team-based games because it provides such an even playing field. As you can see from the level layout, the base is smack deb in the middle of the map, with the other structures serving as "skirmish points" or shelter for battle.

Don't be afraid to stick behind a well and pick your opponent apart from a distance. Sure, sometimes it can feel like you're not dishing out the damage quite as quickly as some of your tearmates. But during team-based games, remember that your deaths count almost as-much as your kills. Stay covered and you'll find yourself dying far less often.

#### THE PNV-3 SISKA

You'll find the Siska in the center of the base, up on the bridge. Like any of the other levels, this is a sought-after weapon because of its damage. Near-instant hit speed keeps the Siska projectiles useful for even the longest of distances. At close range, though, make sure you aim at the feet of your opponent rather than directly at them, it increases your chances of connecting and almost guarantees you'll dizzy them with splash damage from the explosion. Using an assault rifle while dizzy is anything but easy.

#### USING GRENADES EFFECTIVELY

This level has the BP-02, the M327, and of course, the standard M134 hand grenades. With all the little nooks and crannies formed by the hills, it's the absolute perfect setting to use any of the above,

We found it useful to use grenades—or better yet, "door knockers" when entering occupied rooms in the base area. If you've got a holedup individual or even a holed-up team, then grenades are one of the best ways to flush them out. Take note of the extra grenade locations!





#### WHAT WE SAID IN

The good? "Slick tectical approach to FPS design hersh and gritty visual assinatic, solid multi-clayer, and the weapon What didn't we like? Engine pushes the PS2

# AYER

#### CANYON CROSSING

#### THE HILLS

This is a large map that's absolutely littered with rolling hills connecting the outside borders to the building-populated main area. Many of the player respawn points are scattered up in the hills, well beyond the buildings. That said, you'll need to learn item placement as quickly as you can.

If you stay crouched on top of almost any hill, you'll have a great view of the level without making yourself an open target. Grab a weapon with zoom and you'll have a good time picking off enemies from afar.

#### 1 PNV-3 SISKA TIPS

The Siska has an incredibly slow reload time, but its damage and range make it a desirable and interesting weapon. If you're smart, you'll time the Siska respawn and do loops around the area to keep other players from getting it.

From long range, remember that the Silvia rounds will drop a little

more severely than a standard bullet. With that in mind, make sure you adjust your crosshairs a little higher than normal if you're aiming at someone across the level. The hills are a great place to use the Siels.

#### 2 THE BRIDGE

The bridge is the one key landmark on this level, and as such, it really attracts a lot of attention during deathmatches. Take note of this if you're applying the "pick up the scrape" technique. If you show up with a highpowered explosive weapon, approach from the hills on the side and you'll take players by surprise. This is one of the quickest ways to rack up kills.

Underneath the bridge is a series of steel walkways. On these walkways are a plethora of items that tend to draw players toward them. We recommend staying off the walkways if you can. Any player who knows what they're doing won't let you get back up once you've gone below. #







## **FACE-OFF**

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2 VS. BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

#### THE QUESTIONS

#### NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

#### BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

OPM Name one thing in your game that you're most proud of now that it's finished.

CHUCK OSIEJA, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER The No. 1 request we received following the release of NFSU was for an open-world environment with more variety, and I'm proud that we were able to deliver.

think that the top one has to be the introduction of aggressive racing and takedowns into this genre. The feeling early on in the development of 83 was that this could be revolutionary, and I feel that it's achieved that.

MATT WEBSTER, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER |

OPM Name one thing you wish you'd done differently.

CO I wish we were able to spend even more time with the career mode. We created such a massive city that most people will never find everything that's hidden in the game.

MW I kinds think that we could have done a lot more with the cars, making them mean more for the player. My sense is that people don't think too hard when selecting a car from their garage.

OPM What have you seen in the other guys' game that made you think, "Damn, I wish we'd done that"?

CO The damage and mayhem in Burnout 3 is the most amazing and visceral five seen in any game. The impact and the destruction of the cars in the game literally make you flinch. Because we use licensed cars, creating car damage to that extent is not something we got the opportunity to do in NFSU2.

MW I love the fact that I can sit with the car and make it my own, and that it drives me to play the game even more. It's such a well-designed and well-executed part of the game. Additionally, it would be the introduction of "driving" around the game, deciding what I'm going to do from behind the wheel. That's a great concept.

OPM What have you seen that made you think, "Tee hee, we did that better"?

CO Atmospherel I think from the moment you step foot in Bayview, you feel like you're a part of the world and have a vested interest in what's going on around you.

MW It's got to be the sense of speed. It's access of Burnout that we've got to have the player consciously telling their eyelids to blink. That, and our crash and particle systems.

**OPM** Does it bother you that you have to compete with another EA racing game on store shelves?

CO No, not really. While both games feature cars, they offer totally different experiences. I find myself picking up Burnout 3 with friends or when I just want to get a racing fix and don't have a lot of time. NFSU2 is more of an investment for me; I spend a lot of time exploring, racing, and building out my car to get it justright. Burnout 3 is a trip though the drive-though, and NFSU2 is like sitting down for Thanksgiving dinner. They both fill you up, but they are vastly different meals.

MW Well, I actually think that the two games are complementary. I truly believe that people will want to go for both, and that's a result of us working together and being smart about the fact that we have two driving games in the stable. It's much better to work together and help define where the games differentiate, and competition between the teams to be the best that they can be is really healthy! Ultimately, it will make both teams and titles much, much better.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Production for Control of the Contro

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE IS	SILE
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carm	ichael THO		
My Street	Sony CEA		67
Myst III Exile	Ubisoft		Бз
Mystic Heroes	Коет	991	03
MX Unleasked Namco Musaum	Namco	***	79 53
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	991	34
- NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cu		*****	85
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	****	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports		43
NASCAR Thunder 2003  NASCAR Thunder 2004	EA Sports	*****	62 73
NASCAR Dirt to Daytona	EA Sports Infogrames	****	63
Naval Ops Warship Gunner			
NBA 2K2	Sega Sports	****	53
NBA 2K3	Sega Sports	*****	63
NBA Ballers	Midway Sports	****	80
NBA Hoopz NBA Jam 2004	Midway Acclaim		75
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports		42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports		51
<ul> <li>NBA Live 2003</li> </ul>	EA Sports	****	63
• N8A Live 2004	EA Sports		75
NBA Live 2005	EA Sports		86
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA		44
NBA ShootOut 2003  NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA Sony CEA		63 75
NBA Starting Five	Konami		
NBA Street	EA Sports Big	*****	47
NBA Street Vol. 2	EA Sports Big	•••••	68
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports		e 2
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports		60
NCAA Final Four 2001 NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA Sony CEA		41 52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA		64
NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	••	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	*****	48
NCAA Football 2003	EA Sports	*****	60
NCAA Football 2004 NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	****	- /1
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NCAA GameBreaker 2001 NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	•1	83 41 61
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Rockstar 94 Capcom •••• 43

We weren't expecting the latest NASCAR gam rom EA Sports to be quite so engaging, espe cially to those who aren fans of the sport. Call it the "EA-ification" of the game. The next EA Sports franchise to get that kind of treatment? Look for a new Fight

Night in 2005

	GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE N	OUE
	Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom		80
1	Drimusha 3. Demon Siege	Capcon		او
	Orphen Scion of Sorcery	Activ sion		515
	Pac-Man Fever	Nanco		ty.
	Pac-Man World 2		00001	54
e	PaRappa the Rapper 2 Paris-Dakar Rally	Sony CEA Accla m		53
		NIS America	*****	85
'n	Pirates The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games		55
	Pitfall The Lost Expedition	Activision		80
	Pool Paradise	Ignition		83
	Portal Runner Power Drome	300	••	50
	The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Mud Duck Bam		84 65
	Pride FC		****	65
4	Primal	Sony CEA	****	ь8
4	Prince of Person: The Sands of Time	Ubiselt		75
		Codemasters		For-
	Project Eden	Eidos	9001	5/
	Pryzm Chapter One The Derk Unicorn TDI PSI-Ops. The Mindgate Conspiracy	K Mediactive Midway		60 82
	PTO IV		***	66
	Q Ball Biliards Master	Take Two		40
	Quake III Revolution	EA Games		44
	R Racing Evolution		****	76
		Fresh Games		78
	Rally Fusion Race of Champions Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	***	64
	Retchet & Clark	Sony CEA		63
	Rutchet & Clank: Going Commando	Sony CEA	*****	75
	Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	Sony CEA		
	Rayman 2: Revolution		*****	41
	Rayman 3. Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft		67
	Rayman Arena RC Revenge Pro	Ubisoft Acclaim	991	57
	Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway		40
	Real Pool	Infogrames		40
	Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway		57
	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	****	82
	Red Faction			46
			****	
	Red Faction II	THO	****	D.
	Real Fishing III Reign of Fire		****	
	Real Fishing III Reign of Fire Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	THQ Natsume Bam	9000 9000 9001	D.
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HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE GTA SAN ANDREAS? WE HIT THE 1UP MESSAGE BOARDS TO FIND OUT.

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"I have been playing GTA since it used the 2D serial view setup. I have been more and more impressed with each release, and San Andreas is no exception. I'm completely addicted to it and hope I finish soon, only so I can get some sleep again."

Nate Torbett

"Rockster North has really outdone itself this time. [With] over 100 hours worth of gameplay here (not including the time spent doing whatever you please), you'll play half of the game and wonder where your life truly resides. The best part of it is that if you have played a GTA game before, you'll know this game is no recycled version of the previous titles. Clear your schedule out for this one. Your new name is CJ, welcome to San Andreas, enjoy your stay....

Michael Grosse

"While waiting for this game to come out, I wasn't sure if it would be able to live up to the hype...but wow, it lives up to my expectations and surpasses them. I haven't even done very many missions yet but have had fun just riding around on a bicycle, doing drive-bys, driving around, shooting people, and skydiving, which is my favorite pastime so far. This game is excellent—it surpasses both GTA3 and GTA: Vice City in almost every way, and I will be playing it for months, even years, to come.

Corey Knopf

"I just bought this game, and I must say that I am astounded by the sheer size of it! I feel for the level designers who must have put hundreds if not thousands of hours into constructing these beautiful cities. It's a lot more interactive than the last GTA, too; you can now personalize your character, eat in restaurants, and go to the casino! The game's atmosphere and sense of interactivity remind me of the Shenmue series on Dreamcast. This game has so much to offer, you can't go wrong with it."

Gerrit Jan Kuipers

#### WHAT WE SAID:

"Spectacular-it sets the bar so high that it leaves a lot of games in the dust."



#### MARCADIA (MULTIPLAYER)

 In capture the flag, a good strategy is to send the entire team on offense at once (sometimes it's a good idea to leave one person behind to defend). Try to have at least two people on offense use the gravity bomb to do some "crowd control." When two people have the gravity bomb and you are attacking to get the flag, they can be extremely effective because the area is so small. The lava gun is very good in this situation as well. While the people with the gravity bomb/lava gun control the opposing team, have a third member with charge boots make a dash for the flag.

 In a CTF match, place mines around your flag to deter the enemy from entering your base area. The best way to counter this strategy is to get the gravity bomb and drop a few into the pit with the flag before you jump in to steal it.

 A good deathmatch strategy is to get. upgraded rockets as quickly as possible and then try to pick your opponents off from a distance with the RPG. The best way to counter a player with an upgraded RPG is to get the sheepinator and charge boots. Charge up to the opponent before they can get a lock on you and sheepinate them to steal the weapon?

The player turret in the center of the map is a devastating weapon. However, when you use it, you are completely in the open and become everyone's prime target!

#### KORGON OUTPOST, PLANET TYHRRANDSIS (NOT PICTURED) [MULTIPLAYER]

 You can sacrifice a hovership to get on top. of the enemy base and take out the defenses. But be careful, the turrets will respawn by the time you get back.

. There's a great sniper position just across the extendable bridge at each base. It can also be a key position in capture the flag games. If you charge-boot off this sniper point and wrenchslam at exactly the right moment, you can make it the entire way across the bridge, allowing you to quickly grab the flag.

. In siege mode, controlling the node in the center of the map is key, because the turboslider ramps will align so you can drive a vehicle from your base to your opponent's base (but your opponent won't be able to do the same). In capture the flag, controlling the center node allows you to get to the enemy base faster, but it makes it harder to get away (because the ramps are facing the wrong direction). So in CTF mode, it is usually better to not control the center node-let the enemy team have it.

· A good CTF strategy on this map is to get the charge boots and then have a buddy extend the bridges for you so you can make a fast getaway. without having to use the hypershot. Your partner can also cover you as you return the flag.



#### PLANET DAXX (SINGLE PLAYER)

- Much of the architecture on Planet Daxx is destructible. What does this mean to you? it means the barricade you took cover behind after that ambush is now being torn spart by snemy fire. If you don't keep moving, you'll soon find yourself completely exposed.
- Daxx has some very interesting cover-crate placement. Be sure to use it to your advantage whenever possible.
- The miniturrets are very useful on this level because of the cover placements. Just toss a couple behind the cover and let them do the work for you.
- The holoshield is available for purchase in this level. And there's also a way to fully upgrade it to version 5I Are we gonna tell you how? Not We shouldn't have even told you that the possibility exists.
- Make sure you have enough firepower before you take on the battleship, otherwise you will run out of ammunition and be a sitting duck. (And not a friendly, flaming duck like those produced by the qwack-o-ray's damage!)



#### JORAAL CRASH SITE, PLANET ZELDRIN (SINGLE PLAYER)

- "There is only one continue point at the creek site right in the middle of the level, so be sure to stock up on arrano before heading out.
- Rumor has it that Dr. Nefarious kept a device called a nanopack on the Leviathen (the crashed ship). Obtaining this trinket isn't required, but you won't be sorry if you can discover its location.
- For some reason, your enemies are desperate to keep you away from the wrecked space cruiser on this planet. You can expect that they'ill be setting up traps, teleporting in, and ambushing you at every turn. What to do? Even the odds by bringing troops of your own! The Agents of Doom and a few well-placed miniturests will make short work of an enemy legion while you hang back to take potshots with the weapon of your choice.
- This would be a great time to invest in the disk blade gun. It has a huge range, seeks out targets, and can hit multiple enemies. It's especially useful on those pesky flying soldier bots.

#### INSIDE INFO

INSIDE INFO
In the wake of the release
of Up Your Arsenal, Insomniac has rolatarchan ins
websita. Visitors will find
exclusive artwork and
movies, forums frequented
by insomiac employees,
exclusive codes for multiplayer skins, and a regularry updated "blarg." Hit

\*\*WWW.MOUTH Sequence, codes
\*\*The Committee of the Committ





ology of buying sports games is this: infinite gameplay without ever getting a repeat, result. Sports equals the best bargain in videogames by a long shot. Talk to any RPGer (at your own risk) and they'll gloat about sappy, tearjerking story lines translated into hideously misspelled Japanglish sentences. But us sporty types know that sports are all about story lines without the silly sentimentality-from your Madden franchise where you turned the defensive end you drafted into the Defensive Rookie of the Year, to your late-minute strike to beat Arsenal in Winning Eleven's Champions' League, to emerging victorious in your 11th straight three-point shootout over your Chatty Cathy trash-talking roommate in the latest Live.

With that in mind, I must report that I haven't played a sports game in three weeks (the exception being a review of Sony's *Gretzky NHL* 2005—though is hockey still a sport?). I'll admit

#### TODD ZUNIGA

le a former OPM staffer turned freelence writer. If you have a question about sports games, want a prediction, or just disagree, mail him at thesportsguy@ziffdevis.com.

moments of weakness when I've idly considered slam-dunk-contesting my way through the latest NBA Live or partaking in the realistically paced NBA 2K6 or even building up DePaul's semireputable program in March Madness 2006. But then the load screen disappears and I emerge from my Los Santos crib, getting respect because I'm living the thug life as CJ, the illest mofo this side of Crenshaw Boulevard.

During my mild urges to get dunkedelic, I can't justify switching out discs when the game i'm pleying figured out that it's possible to blend story line with infinite gameplay while leaving kees? It still feels daydreemlike. Next spring, when pinstripe-minded Yankees fans try to gloat about their proverbial 28 World Series rings, Red Sox Nation can hold up their latest ring (proverbially, of course) and say, "So? We got this." And how wonderful it will be when the default AL team for a game of MVP 2005 quick play will be the World Champion BoSox. And while we're on the topic of hardball, and because it's December: Santa, all I want for Christmas is for Carlos Baltarn to pretty please sign with the Cubs. And Petro, too.

On to December's can't-miss contests: Football

## SPORTS EQUALS THE BEST BARGAIN IN VIDEOGAMES BY A LONG SHOT.

the gamer feeling like the coolest cat to ever hoist a DualShock. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas is madness, folks (I recognize that this isn't a news flash), and when I even half glance at my hoops-heavy game shelf. I just jack a car, crank up NWA, and hit the Los Santos asphalt for a game of 1-on-1.

Beyond the GTA worship, it's time for pastime chatter. The Red Sox winning the World Series, I get—they dominated/crushed/humilitated the Redbirds. But didn't they get swept by the Yan-

season this month means Saturday gamas—yea! Madden-picked must-sees: December 12, the Seahawks versus Vikings (this NFC Championship precursor has the Vikes victorious 20-17), and December 19's Broncos at Chiefs (my Broncs come up in a low scorer, 16-13—take that, Priestl). In European football, the Premiership could be decided with Arsenal versus Chelses on December 12. And Christmas Day has rownasters Shaq and Kobe toe-to-toeing in Los Santos— I mean Los Angeles. Drop the gloves! @



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#### REMIND FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM



### THE MORE THINGS CHANGE... January of 2000 was the dawn of a new mil-

lennium (or a year away from the dawn of a new millennium, depending on how picky you are). What's surprising is how little has changed since then.

#### **GRAN DESIGNS**

Turns out that exactly five years ago we featured the same franchise on our cover as we do this month. Gran Turismo 2 was wowing us with its increased realism. improved handling.

#### THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

Meanwhile, in the world beyond games. The world was reeling in the wake of absolutely not effects of the Y2K bug, six-year-old Elian Gonzales was being subpoenaed by the House of Representatives, America Online was buying Time Warmer; a freak snowstorm was blanketing the astonished South; and Who Wants to Be a Millionaire was breaking television records.



and most shockingly its stable of over 500 cars. Our concise feature was the first to run the whole list (though, as it turned out, several got chopped from the final game).

#### PS2 PUSHES FORWARD

In our continuing coverage of the upcoming system, we featured more games that never made it out here, including *Virtual Ocean*, *Golf Paradise*, *Sky Surfer*, and *Munch's Oddysee*.

#### AND I FEEL FINE

In a snarky nod to the widespread fears of global disaster arising around the Y2K bug, we at *OPM* did our part with "The End of the World Survival Guide." This 10-page manifesto featured the best of the best in the world of PlayStation—a handy guide to what to bring with you into your fallout shelter.

#### REVIEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Well, the highest-scoring game in January 2000 was NBA Live 2000, with 4.5 discs. But more interesting to readers of today would be the four-disc score given to Twisted Metal 4, which managed to partially redeem the horrible disappointment of Twisted Metal III.

#### REVIEWS LOWLIGHTS

Shadow Tower, at half a disc, was later to go down in history when we named it one of the worst games ever made. At the time we could only gawk at its pixellated ugliness.

#### DEMO MADNESS

While a few sports games made things interesting for the jock types, *Dino Crisis* was the real focus this month. Though the series never quite caught on the way *Resident Evil* did, it was still a darn fine survival-horror game.

#### CHART TOPPERS

Driver shot to the top of the sales charts in January of 2000, followed unsurprisingly by Final Fantasy VIII and the third-place debut of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. Rounding out the top five were Maddan NFL 2000 and NASCAR 2000. Four out of five still-relevant series ain't bad, right? «

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